BING

Spring
2013

No. 163

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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UK	£15 per annum
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Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
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All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year.

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EDITORIAL

Here it is, your first issue of *BING* magazine for 2013. We trust the year is off to a grand start, and that none of you may be suffering from triskaidekaphobia as a result of the calendar change. It is a year full of great possibilities, and we hope many great things for the ICC and Crosbyites in general.

The year began on a sad note, when word reached us that longtime stalwart Bing Crosby supporter **Hobie Wilson** passed away on January 15th after a long illness. There will be more on Hobie and the legacy he leaves behind later in this issue.

It is a real pity that Universal Home Entertainment missed a great milestone opportunity to remaster the classic Irving Berlin musical *Holiday Inn* and reissue it in high definition on Blu-ray in time for the 2012 Christmas season... and the 70th anniversary of the film's premiere. Sales of Blu-ray discs are soaring, and a great many classic titles have already been reissued in that format. We await the high-def reissues of this, and some of Bing's other beloved films, such as *High Society* and *Going My Way* in due course.

On a happier note, for the week of December 15th, Bing Crosby had not one, not two, but THREE albums on Billboard magazine's Top 200 record chart! These are the week's top-selling albums across ALL genres, ranked by sales data as compiled by Nielsen SoundScan. He was at #146 with Universal's 'White Christmas' (formerly 'Merry Christmas'), at #148 with Capitol's 'Bing Crosby's Christmas Classics', and at #177 with Universal's 'The Best of Bing Crosby: 20th Century Masters.' The climb up the charts continued for the week of December 22nd, when 'The Best of Bing' moved up to #146, 'Christmas Classics' moved up to #112, and 'White Christmas' moved up to #105. For the third consecutive week, ending December 29th, all three albums were STILL on the chart. Incredible! Just goes to show the music of Bing is timeless and transcends generations.

Lastly, 2013 marks the 10th anniversary of the merger of Club Crosby and the (then) International Crosby Circle, as well as the 110th anniversary of Bing's birth. It has been my pleasure to serve as your American Co-Editor since the merger. Prior to that, I spent another dozen years or so as a contributor to Club Crosby's *BINGANG* magazine, so I've been writing about all things Crosby for well over 20 years now. It has been a labor of love, and I am happy to continue on in this capacity. But, just as Malcolm indicated in the previous issue, I, too, would be perfectly willing to stand down if there is anyone else who may wish to take over.

Before turning things over to my esteemed co-editor, we both offer our sincere thanks and gratitude to honorary member Regis Philbin. He gave the ICC some

marvelous exposure this past December during his hosting duties on SiriusXM's Bing Crosby Christmas Radio. Each of us have received a number of inquiries as a result of his 'plug' on our behalf, and we hope that these folks will decide to join the world's oldest active fan club in due course.

Greg Van Beek

Hands up those of you who have had to rush to your dictionaries to check on "triskaidekaphobia". I certainly did!

It's good to read about Bing's albums appearing in the charts and the inclusion of Bing in Michael Bublé's holiday special gave Mr. Crosby some useful exposure too. More details on a subsequent page. A commercial by Tiffany & Co featuring Bing singing "You're All I Want For Christmas" was seen during December as well.

Our front cover this time was supplied by Greg Van Beek and our thanks go to Bing's friend George O'Reilly for letting us reproduce one of the many letters he received from Bing on our inside back cover. In between the covers, we have a wide variety of items varying from a fascinating interview with our man in 1976 to a look at Bing's "disciples". Greg Van Beek meets up with the son of one of the original Mills Brothers, Keith Parkinson considers Bing's golfing shorts and Ken Crossland looks at some much awaited CD and DVD releases. Gord Atkinson will return in our next issue.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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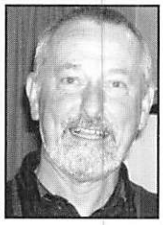
SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT



Spring! Hopefully will have sprung by the time you are reading this brief report and it will be in marked contrast to the miserable weather many members will have endured this past winter. I was fortunate to escape for some weeks to Hawaii, where, blissfully, the sun shines most of the time. I thought I would escape the Editor's regular reminder about my article as he was in New Zealand while I was in Hawaii but no, his face suddenly appeared on my computer via Skype to mention that he would need my submission as soon as I got back!

On a serious note I would draw members' attention to this year's accounts which, although healthy, indicate a shortfall in membership income when compared with the cost of printing BING. I have split subscriptions and donations to show the shortfall and to demonstrate the generous support we get from our benefactors. I would ask you to be generous when you next renew your subscription.

Sadly, and just as I was about to send my report to Malcolm, I learned that **Jean Rainey**, the last surviving founding officer of the *British Bing Club*, had died suddenly from a heart attack on February 17th. Jean recently returned to the club after a 45 year absence and renewed her interest in Bing's career. She was a dedicated member who was exceptionally benevolent in her support for the club. Jean's letters and warm hearted support will be missed.

I would like to thank fellow member and friend Alf Bunn for giving up his time to parcel up and send out the *Road to Hong Kong* CD to UK members and trust that all those who ordered now have their copies.

The Bing scene is relatively quiet with few new releases but I understand that a British company has made available three of Bing's films including *Dixie* and *Sing You Sinners*. No doubt Ken will enlighten us as to the quality of these products in his eagerly anticipated review.

Finally, I would like to thank Malcolm, Wig, David and Greg for their dedicated service to the club during past year.

NEW MEMBERS

UNITED STATES

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of the ICC with a wish that their involvement with the club will bring them interest and enjoyment as they share their hobby with fellow Bing enthusiasts.
Stan Leyland (New York, New York), Johnny Owens (Chattanooga, Tennessee), Ronald Reichard (St. Louis, Missouri), Pablo Martinez (Granger, Indiana), Preston Schlueter (Minnetrista, Minnesota).

DONATIONS

We very much appreciate the financial help provided by the following generous members from: -

UNITED STATES

Details will be provided in the summer edition of the magazine.

UNITED KINGDOM

Edward Broadley, the late Jean Rainey, Paul Hennessey, John Davis, Frank Startup, John Salisbury, Donald Bostock and Jeremy Rose have continued their very generous support for the ICC and the following members have also gifted very helpful sums, thus ensuring that the account remains healthy going into 2013.
William Hughes, Berni Hemsley, Stan Mayer, Frans van

der Kolff, Jonathan Cook, George Patmore, Frank Challenger, Barbara Holmes, Eddie McGinley, E G Allen, Ian Patience, David Grossman, Frank Brannigan, Chris Hitchcock, Chris Simmons, Bob Halls, Mervyn Thomas, Nicholas Morrison, Arthur Blood, Maria Roth, Derek Perkins, Lars Schinnerling, Ken Heason, Geoff White, Michael Haefner, June Manton, Lew Grassby, Mrs B A Sellers, Klaus Halm, Trevor Wagstaff, Mr L W Pugh, Des Cusack, Christine Mann, John Stiles, Tom Sim, Harry C Ross, Dennis Saville, Geoffrey L Robinson, Bert Bishop, Doreen C Hubbard, R W T Addey, Mike O'Donaghue, Jack Winegrad, Stan Woodford, John R Byrd, Frank Thompson, Gwen Harvey, John Bignell, Matthew Sprott, Tom Wallace, R E Sharp, Ken Shaw, Leslie Mills, M V Heywood, Albert Harvey, Ron Holder.

Donations and legacies are very welcome and gratefully acknowledged and we thank our beneficiaries for their continuing support.

DEATHS

Greg has already noted the passing of **Hobie Wilson.** This was a sad blow and a separate tribute follows. As previously mentioned, we were also truly sorry to learn of the death of **Jean Rainey** (Blythe Hill Lane, London). Also, we extend our sincere condolences to **Sue Horn** of Lawrenceville, Georgia, USA following the sudden loss of her dear husband **Alberto Jimenez.**

We wish the family and friends of the above every comfort in this their most difficult and trying time.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 1 to 7, 9 & 10 (#8 sold Out)

These attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.00 and the price for Europe £7.50. Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington. The price for members in the rest of the world is £8.50.

BING CROSBY and the KRAFT MUSIC HALL – ICC 75th anniversary issue.

This acclaimed CD remains available from me and you are welcome to send for additional copies if you require them.

LEEDS 2013 (48th meeting)

Sunday October 6th is the date for your diary.

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

Hobie Wilson

Hobart Garrett "Hobie" Wilson, Jr. passed away at his Petaluma, California residence on January 15, 2013 at the age of 80 years. He was a loving husband for over 56 years to Cathie and devoted father of Elizabeth, Eileen, and Loretta.

"Hobie" was president and founding member of the "Bing's Friends and Collectors Society". He started issuing the Society's newsletter back in 1981 with Larry Gunn, Les Wilson, Priscilla Koernig and his wife Cathie, who was described as "the reluctant spear carrier". Your Editor had the great pleasure of meeting Hobie and Cathie at Gonzaga in 2003.

On Sunday evenings Hobie could be heard on his

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2012

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions	9237	Production of BING magazine	11100
Donations	1438	Calendars	1310
Legacy - Joseph F. Siebenhaar, Jr.	2035	AGM (Leeds) costs	598
Sales - Calendars	1027	Secretarial costs	128
Leeds meeting - receipts	598	Sepia CDs - costs	3307
Sales – Books / back issues	168	Editorial costs	53
Sales – Sepia CDs	6519	Postage – books/back issues	32
Sales – KMH CDs	12	Returned cheques	14
Bank balance 31/12/2011	11188	Bank balance 31/12/2012	15680
	32222		32222

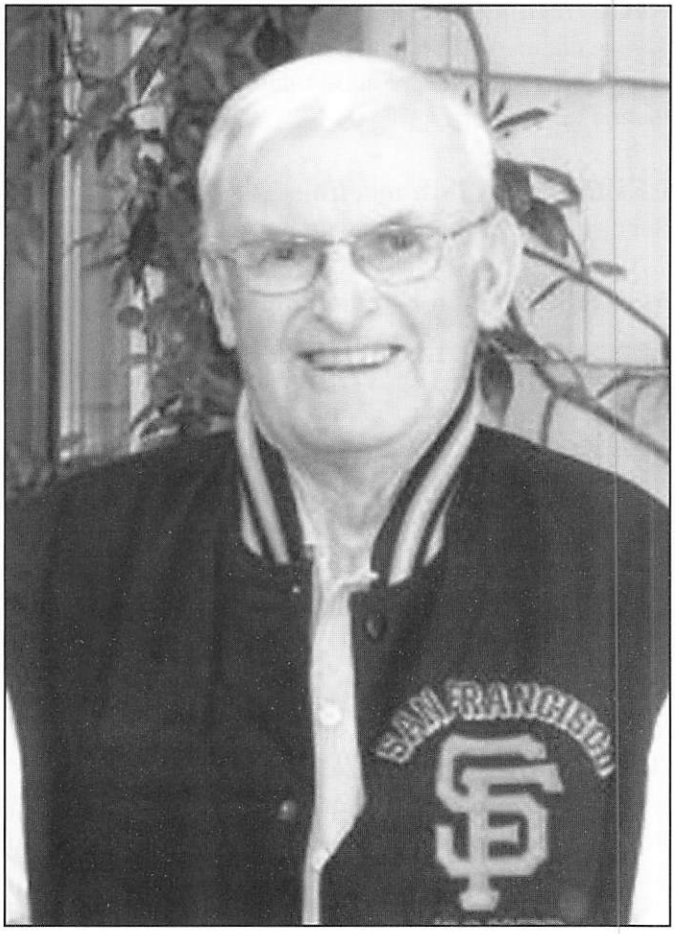
Note:

1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary. Amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2013.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

local radio station KTOB playing big band music and of course, Bing. He served in the Army at the end of the Korean War and later worked for the Post Office in San Francisco for over 36 years.

His hobby allowed him to rub elbows with some of the greats, including Bing, Bob Hope and many Hollywood celebrities.



Hobie in retirement

"He was a very shy kind of fellow until you got him on a topic that he loved, which was family and certainly music," said Cathie. "Bing Crosby was his passion."

Hobie's interest in music began early and he bought his first Crosby record at 15 and kept on collecting. He was a fixture at Crosby golf tournaments in Pebble Beach and even talked to his idol once. He was so impressed with Bing that he could barely speak.

"He liked Bing because of his talent," Cathie said. "He thought he had the best voice around."

Hobie's last newsletter (#165) was issued in November 2009 when he warned us that he had serious health issues. We shall miss Hobie's cheerful enthusiasm for Bing and we send sincere condolences to Cathie and the family.

Thomas Patrick McNulty

ICC member Mr. McNulty from Long Island, NY had a surprise private 80th birthday party on March 1st when Crosby tribute artist Bob Pasch entertained. Greg Van Beek arranged for a certificate to be sent along from the ICC congratulating him on his milestone birthday.

Bing Crosby Enterprises

We have not heard anything from BCE about new releases but Lachlan McLean did come across something on the Internet where Robert Bader talks about what is coming in 2013. It is believed that it came from an interview that Robert gave regarding the 70th anniversary of "White Christmas". The link is at:
http://soundcloud.com/white-christmas-at-70/white-christmas-at-70-bonus-7

In a very short clip, Robert says that BCE have over 2000 unissued Bing Crosby masters and that they have forged a new partnership with Universal (who have 1200 of Bing's Decca masters) and that there will a new series of catalogue releases in 2013. Sounds good and we look forward to further details in due course.

A Note from Gary Giddins

The following appeared on Gary's website on February 1st. Sounds encouraging!
Work is steadily progressing on Volume 2 of the Bing Crosby biography. One friend I've spoken to has read new chapters – she says "If the rest of Volume Two is as good as this, the fans, who've been breathless with anticipation, are sure to be in for a feast!" Stay tuned for news when we're allowed to share more!

Michael Bublé meets Bing!

Michael Bublé: Home for the Holidays was the name of a special shown by NBC on December 10 and it included a very special Bing appearance. The producers obtained video from Bing Crosby Enterprises of Mr. Crosby singing "White Christmas" on his 1971 Christmas special (which incidentally is included in the DVD set "Bing Crosby – The Christmas Specials"). In the finale of the 1971 show Bing's family are trying to stop him singing "White Christmas". The family's images and audio were edited out by modern technology and replaced by Michael Bublé asking Bing if he can join in. Then they sing together. Very cleverly done and it made a most interesting segment of the show. Sky-TV in the UK purchased the show and broadcast it on December 1 and 16. In Australia it was seen on Channel Seven on December 15.

Francois Marchand of the *Vancouver Sun* was there when the special was filmed and here's an extract from his article which was published on December 7.

Michael Bublé channels Bing Crosby for second Christmas special

Michael Bublé is well on his way to become this generation's Bing Crosby. It's early October in Vancouver and Bublé is on his fourth attempt at trying to nail the opening sequence to the TV show that will air Monday night across North America on Citytv and NBC, one that sees him "run all the way home" to celebrate the festive season…

Bing and Michael Bublé sing "White Christmas" together.

There is the swagger and style Bublé co-opted as much from the Rat Pack as he did from ol' Bing, and then there's the love for the Christmas season, which Crosby made into one of his most famous features thanks to "White Christmas", one of the most famous songs of all time.

At one point during the recording of the one-hour special, Bublé quips that he could never do what his Jewish friends do and have "eight days of Christmas."

It's a bit of a ridiculous statement, because Bublé has been doing the Christmas thing for well over a year. "I'll get on a plane in July and put my headphones on and listen to Bing Crosby," Bublé says, sitting in his dressing room after the taping has been completed. "I love it, man. It's not just about Christmas, they're masterfully written songs and truly some of the most wonderful melodies ever written. People still love them and it's not because they're sentimental. They're solid songs."

His first Christmas television special, which featured guests Justin Bieber, Oscar the Grouch and comedian/actor Ed Helms, was also a hit last year.

This time around Bublé has enlisted Rod Stewart (with whom Bublé sings "Winter Wonderland" on the Christmas album "Merry Christmas, Baby"), rising pop star Carly Rae Jepsen of Mission, country sensation Blake Shelton (who also has a Christmas album on which Bublé appears) and fuzzy red critter Elmo for his show, which he hopes will become a yearly occurrence.

The biggest surprise this year is admittedly the special collaboration between Bublé and the late Crosby thanks to the magic of special effects, the two dueting on "White Christmas"…

"I think the Bing thing is going to shock people — it's a blast," Bublé says of the collaboration. "I don't want to set myself up for failure, but so many of these Christmas specials are put together as an afterthought, as a cash cow. For me, I was impacted heavily by Christmas music. Every kid is different, you know? The reason I got into standards was this Bing Crosby record.

"It started to make me realize everyone, as a celebrity or a star, has their moment where they make a dent in pop culture, where they leave a legacy. Mostly it's done through debauchery — getting caught doing drugs or bonking a hooker on a sex tape — so if the way it happens for me is by having a Christmas special every year, like some of my favourite people did, then I just want it to be great."

Francois Marchand

****

The show was followed up by Michael Bublé releasing a new holiday single, "White Christmas" which included the special guest performance by Bing and it was made available worldwide on December 10th and 11th on iTunes. It popped up in the lower reaches of various charts around the world with #40 in Holland being the top spot seen.

Danny Kaye's Centennial

In celebration of actor Danny Kaye's impending centennial, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences screened the holiday classic *White Christmas* at Oscars Outdoors in Hollywood on December 6 and 7, at 7 p.m. Special guests included Dena Kaye, Mary Crosby and Monsita Ferrer Botwick, the daughters of Kaye, Bing and Rosemary Clooney, respectively. Hollywood special effects wizards arranged snow at the open-air theater on the Academy Hollywood campus, bringing the evening to a dramatic conclusion. December marked the start of the celebration of Danny Kaye's centennial, a year of festivities across the country spotlighting the legendary entertainer and humanitarian.

The press release continued:

"Directed by Michael Curtiz with songs by Irving Berlin, *White Christmas* tells the story of song-and-dance team Bob Wallace and Phil Davis (Crosby and Kaye), two World War II veterans who team up with sister act Betty and Judy Haynes (Clooney and Vera-Ellen) to raise money for a struggling Vermont inn run by Bob and Phil's former commanding general. The film earned an Oscar® nomination for the original song "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep," music and lyrics by Berlin."

Attendees were encouraged to bring low lawn chairs, blankets and warm clothing. Hot chocolate and holiday treats were available for sale from some of Los

Angeles's most popular food trucks. Picnic baskets, beer and wine were permitted too.

(l to r) Dena Kaye, Mary Crosby and Monsita Ferrer Botwick

Maureen Solomon was there for us and emailed us as follows:

> "We had a wonderful screening of *White Christmas* Thursday night at the Motion Picture Academy in Hollywood. It was an outside screening and the cold contributed to the Christmas-y feel. At the end of the film when it finally snows at the Inn, they activated blowers on both sides of the huge screen and snow filled the air. Mary Crosby, Dena Kaye and Monsita Ferrer were present and spoke about their famous parents.
>
> Also, I noticed that when Bing kisses Rosemary after singing "Count Your Blessings," the audience cheered! For many, this may have been the first Bing film they've ever seen on a movie screen. Everyone loved it!"

Bing Crosby, "White Christmas" top *TuneIn* users' holiday music searches

Last November, streaming aggregator and tuning service and app maker *TuneIn* reported on some holiday-related listener research it had done.

TuneIn said that Bing was the most searched-for holiday artist among its 40 million monthly active listeners, followed by Nat King Cole, Johnny Mathis, Frank Sinatra, and Andy Williams.

Crosby's "White Christmas" was the most searched-for holiday song on *TuneIn,* topping "All I Want for Christmas (Is You)," "The Christmas Song," "Let It Snow," and "Blue Christmas."

Probably not a surprise, *TuneIn* said holiday music listening is heaviest in the U.S. and Canada—but ranks Japan third! In the U.S., Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan show the more holiday music streaming than any other states.

7th Annual Bing Crosby Festival

This took place at the Bing Crosby Theater in Spokane on December 8. The order of events was:
12 Noon *White Christmas*
2:30 p.m. *The Bells of St. Mary's*
5 p.m. *Holiday Inn*
7:30 p.m. *White Christmas*

Those attending were also able to check out the Oscar that Bing won for his performance in 1944's *Going My Way*, which was on loan from the Crosby Collection at the Gonzaga University Library and a display of Crosby photos owned by Jerry Dicker. Dicker bought the theater this year and then purchased the Ron Bosley collection of photos.

Members will recall that the Advocates is a volunteer, non-profit organization established to recognize the value of a historic theater which is also an historic place because of its connection with Bing's career. The Bing Crosby Theater is located at 901 W. Sprague Avenue in Spokane, Washington.

Jerry Dicker came to Spokane about 10 years ago having made his money in a successful California real estate business. His purchase of the *Bing Crosby Theater* from former owner Mitch Silver was announced in February 2012. The theater was originally called the Clemmer but went through a series of name changes, as the Audian, the State and The Met. It became the Bing in 2006 to recall Crosby's growing up in Spokane and his live appearances at the theater as part of movie shows in 1925.

(Editor: And there's more about the Theater...)

Bing Crosby Theater getting state-of-the-art upgrades

Mike Prager writing in Spokane's "The Spokesman-Review" on December 31 had some good news about the Bing Crosby Theater.

Improvements to the Bing Crosby Theater are creating a buzz. Jerry Dicker purchased the downtown Spokane landmark 10 months ago and went to work.

There's a new high-definition movie projector and screen that will soon be wired into a new surround sound audio system. The leaky roof has been repaired. New heating and air conditioning systems are making the theater more comfortable. And a new outside sign is lighting up the theater's east side at night.

Events have been filling the theater's 756 seats, and there is now demand for even more shows in the historic 1915 movie palace at 901 W. Sprague Ave.

"The Bing is going really well," said Dicker, a real estate investor and developer who has become a major figure in historic preservation in Spokane.

He paid $1 million to classic car collector Mitch Silver last February to buy the Bing, with plans to sink at least $500,000 and probably more into renovation and upgrades.

"He is going to have a product that people will want to visit," said theater manager Michael Smith, who is expanding the range of events.

Movies shown at the theater are varied: Some claiming to push intellectual thought are coming to the theater on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for early evening entertainment, and Smith is talking about hosting a film festival featuring amateur videos shot by people wearing GoPro helmet cams while skiing or skateboarding.

A Bing cinema festival is planned to open Jan. 19 with a showing of the James Bond thriller *Dr. No* and other classic films. The theater will serve martinis that are shaken, not stirred, during the 1962 Bond film. Other showings will be vintage rock concerts redone with digital sound.

The theater also is preparing to provide live streaming video for incoming and outgoing shows. It is also being equipped to create digital recordings for later sale.

There's talk of a new live comedy series called "Bada Bing."

"It's going to be fun here," Smith said.

"We want people to look at the Bing and say there's always something happening there," added Dicker.

The theater is reaching out to the community for partnerships.

One of those is with Christian Youth Theater Spokane, which is staging "The Little Mermaid Jr.," starting on Feb. 22 for seven performances.

"I love CYT," Dicker said.

At some point, the theater will be turned over to a foundation and board to run as a nonprofit, Dicker said. But he wants to get improvements funded and in place before that happens.

The project list keeps growing. Space on the third and fourth floors overlooking Sprague Avenue and Lincoln Street could be renovated for use as a lounge, event center or possibly even a Bing Crosby museum.

Dicker has purchased a private collection of Crosby memorabilia for future display *(Editor: This was Ron Bosley's collection)*. He said he would like to work with Gonzaga University, which also has an extensive collection.

"We reach out to as many partners as we can," Dicker said.

…Built as one of the country's most elaborate movie palaces, the former Clemmer Theater drew audiences to the luxurious surroundings of an opera house. It retains that character today.

It was placed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places in 1990 and the national register in 1998. Dicker said he believes it is one of the five best historic buildings in Spokane.

Businessman Jerry Dicker looks at some Bing Crosby memorabilia stored at the Bing Crosby Theater.

During the 1920s, live acts performed between movies, including one in 1925 with Spokane's own Bing Crosby.

The Oscar-winning *The Sound of Music* movie ran at the theater – then called the State – for a city record of 54 weeks in 1964 and 1965, according to the historic register nomination.

The former Metropolitan Mortgage & Securities Co. bought the theater and renovated it for a reopening in 1988 as the Metropolitan Theater of Performing Arts, or The Met. Smith was hired that year and has managed the theater since.

Silver acquired the theater in 2004 and agreed with Bing Crosby fans to rename the theater the Bing in 2006 to commemorate Spokane's beloved stage, screen and recording star. Dicker's acquisition in February came through his GVD Commercial Properties Inc.

…The theater is trying to keep costs affordable by charging rents of $500 to $800 for nonprofit groups. But show organizers have to agree to spend a few hundred dollars on advertising or promotions to ensure a crowd turns out.

"We don't want people renting the theater and not producing an audience," Dicker said.

Mike Prager

White Christmas – the movie

White Christmas was shown in a number of locations during December as well as Hollywood and Spokane which we have already mentioned. Some of the other venues were the Heights Theatre, Minneapolis; The New York Public Library; The Genesee, Waukegan,

Illinois; Tivoli Theater in Downers Grove, Illinois; Historic Tennessee Theater in downtown Knoxville; the Music Box Theater, Chicago; World Theater in Kearney, Nebraska; SIFF Cinema Uptown Seattle; Crest Theatre in Sacramento; Alabama Theater, Birmingham, Alabama and in the UK, The Soho Screening Room in London and the Cottage Road Cinema, Headingley, Leeds. And it was on TV too!

The stage version has popped up all over the place too including the Lowry in Salford Quays in the UK where your editor saw it in December. Many members have told us about the stage version over the years and I had tended to avoid it as I thought it would compare unfavourably to the film. But of course we should not really compare a multi-million dollar wide-screen movie packed with top Hollywood stars with a stage musical and instead we should accept the stage version for what it is. Having made that point, I found it to be an interesting and well-done adaption of the story with many Irving Berlin songs added, more dance routines and the part of the housekeeper (Mary Wickes in the film) expanded to a singing role. *Coronation Street's* Wendi Peters played the Wickes part on stage and almost stole the show with her Mermanesque delivery of "Let Me Sing and I'm Happy". Ken Kercheval (Cliff Barnes in *Dallas*) played the General. Claire Sweeney took the Rosie Clooney part and Steven Houghton (also from *Coronation Street*) was Bob Wallace (Bing). The theatre arranged fake snow to fall on the audience at the finale which was a nice touch.

The Alabama Theater, Birmingham, Alabama also showed the movie that started it all - *Holiday Inn* - on December 20.

Bing's "Utopia" suit

Maureen Solomon tells me that the suit jacket that Bing wore in *Road to Utopia* was put on display in November for one day only at The Hollywood Heritage Museum in the Lasky-DeMille Barn, 2100 North Highland Avenue, (across from the Hollywood Bowl) Hollywood, California. The jacket is owned by Paramount and Hollywood Heritage set it up at the Barn as a display for their 100th Anniversary Tribute to Paramount on November 14th. Paramount provided an overview of its movie-making history and film preservation by showcasing movie footage and artifacts from its archives collection. A panel discussion and visual presentation by the studio's archives team included film clips, photographs, costume pieces, jewelry and other memorabilia from well-known Paramount movies from the last 100 years.

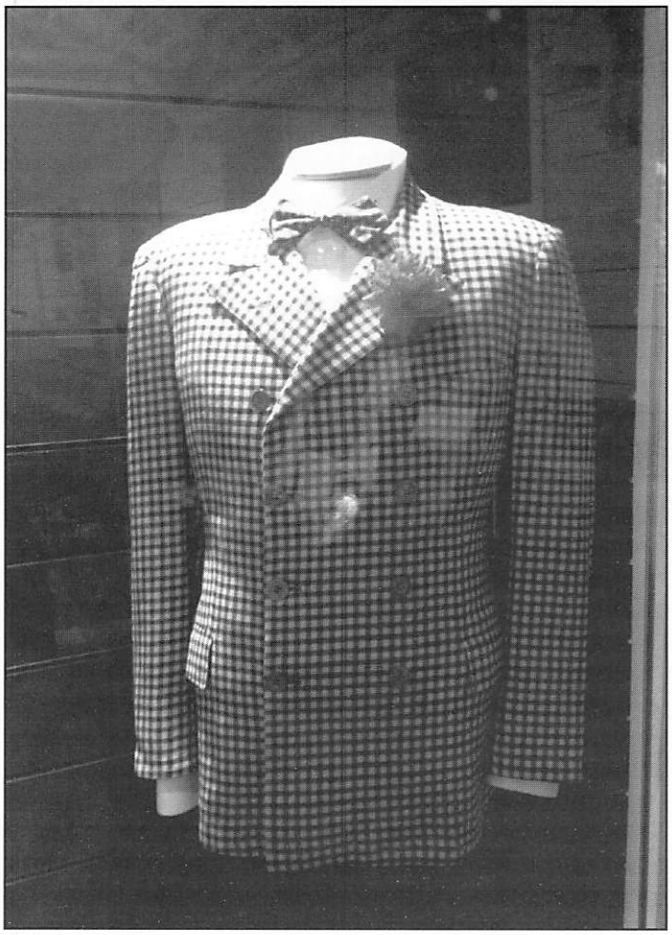


Photo courtesy of Stan Taffel

Southend Film Festival

We mentioned this event planned for October 21st in BING #161 and a number of our members were able to attend. Doreen Hubbard sends a report.

It was with great pleasure that I read in the last BING magazine that there was going to be a 'Bing Crosby Remembered' afternoon to be held at the Park Inn at The Palace Hotel overlooking Southend Pier. As I always read every word in the magazine my eyes got drawn to the mention that Ken Barnes was going to speak about Bing and show lots of clips, many of which had never been seen before, in Southend.

After a small hitch with one piece of equipment, the meeting got under way at about 3pm and we all spent three very pleasurable hours watching and then having a question and answer session. There was a very good section with Ken Barnes speaking with Fred Astaire's grand-daughter. They spoke about the different attitudes of Bing and Fred when filming together - Fred preferring to be well rehearsed whereas Bing was happy to play a round of golf and then turn up and 'do' a performance, quite relaxed and easy.

Fellow members of the ICC, Dennis Saville, Margaret Klisky, my husband and I had thoroughly enjoyed seeing and hearing the tribute to Bing and were hoping that

maybe Ken Barnes might be tempted to make this event perhaps an annual (alternatively bi-annual) meeting place for the people like us who no longer are able to drive up to Leeds any more. I think that perhaps it could have been more advertised as it was pure luck that I noticed a mention in the magazine. I would think that the Bing fans in Kent, Sussex, Surrey etc. would be very willing to do just a couple of hours drive to Southend. It is fitting that the longest surviving (and still very active) fan club in the world, of the first crooner in the world should have a meeting overlooking the longest pier in the world! Obviously, the meeting couldn't rival the wonderful annual reunion held in Leeds and both Malcolm and Michael do such a wonderful job up there but, as I said before, there are many very faithful fans of Bing who just cannot manage the long drive any more.

Doreen Hubbard

Bing Crosby: The Voice America Loved

This is the title of a number of multi-media lectures given by former CBS film editor Jack Schnur at several public libraries in New York state during the winter. Jack's first two-hour lecture started with *Road to Singapore*, in which Bing partnered with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. Clips were shown from *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way* for which Bing won an Oscar as best actor. Mr. Schnur's second presentation covered 1946-1977 with film clips including *The Country Girl*, *High Society* and others. There were also television clips with Bing performing with his children and Bing's duets with Andy Williams, Rosemary Clooney Bob Hope and a few more.

Yes, Indeed! The Great Songs of Bing Crosby

Citizens Who Care **presented its 21st annual benefit concert "Yes Indeed! The Great Songs of Bing Crosby," at the Veterans Memorial Center Theatre, Davis, California on Feb. 23, and again on Feb. 24. The press release said:**

"To most Americans, Bing Crosby was the eternal crooner, a much-celebrated and beloved performer of unparalleled popularity.

Yet he was far more than that. He was an architect of 20th century entertainment, a force in the development of three industries that barely existed when he came into the world—recordings, motion pictures, and broadcasting.

Throughout much of his career, he dominated the music charts with nearly 300 hit singles to his credit. To this, he added stardom in movies, radio and television. His work helped to transform and define the cultural life not only of the United States, but of the world.

"Yes, Indeed! — The Great Songs of Bing Crosby" captures the highlights of Crosby's unparalleled 50-year career, stretching from his early jazz roots with "Bix" Beiderbecke and Paul Whiteman, through his crooner years of the 1930s, his movie hits of the 1940s and 50s, and beyond.

Stephen Peithman tells the Crosby story with the help of performers Joe Alkire, Bob Bowen, Gwyneth Bruch, Martha Dickman, Paul Fearn, Lisa Derthick, and Lenore Sebastian, accompanied by musical director LuAnn Higgs and percussionist Jim Nakayama."

Songs included "Swinging on a Star," "Three Little Words," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Brother Can You Spare a Dime," "It's Easy to Remember," "Don't Fence Me In," "Pennies from Heaven," "What's New?," "Yes, Indeed!," "Blue Skies," "Play a Simple Melody," "How Deep Is the Ocean?," "Too Marvelous for Words," "Dear Hearts and Gentle People," "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," "Imagination," "The Second Time Around," "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening," and "Star Dust," among others.

All proceeds went to benefit *Citizens Who Care*, a nonprofit agency in Yolo County, dedicated to providing social support programs and respite services for the frail elderly and their family caregivers.

Bob & Bing - Road to the Blossom Trail

Bob Pasch was back in action as Bing with Lynn Roberts playing Bob Hope in *Bob & Bing - Road to the Blossom Trail* at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District Theatre in California on February 1. The show was formatted as a 1940's NBC radio broadcast complete with an on-stage staff announcer reading live commercial copy of the period, presenting recorded jingles of the era and interacting with 'Bob', 'Bing' and their legendary radio and film star guests, Red Skelton, Jack Benny and Jimmy Durante. Two performances were given at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. This was a major fund raising event for The Central California Veterans Home Support Foundation.

Late Life Jazz - The Life and Career of Rosemary Clooney

The book by Ken Crossland and your editor is being published by Oxford University Press in New York in July. Details can already be found on the Amazon sites in the USA and the UK and the book can be pre-ordered. Prices are $29.95 and £18.99 respectively. Bing is mentioned frequently of course.

Bing Crosby – Day By Day

Some of you may have your editor's book "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" which was published by

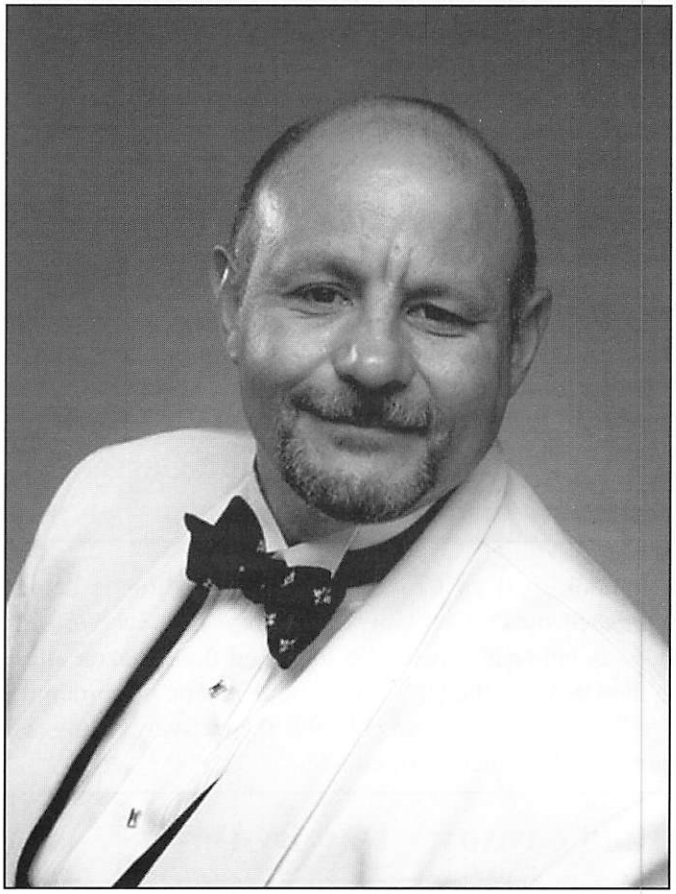
Scarecrow Press in 2001. The book is an in-depth look at Bing's activities virtually on a day-by-day basis. The publishers have recently advised me that they have now sold the entire stock and after discussions with them, it has been agreed that there will not be a reprint. I have therefore placed an updated version of the book on the BING magazine site for all to see and in the hope that it will help researchers get accurate facts about Bing's life and career. If you would like to see it, go to www.bingmagazine.co.uk and click on the link on the left hand side. Last time I looked there were copies of the actual book still available on Amazon – the price was a cool $1246! I thought the decimal point was in the wrong place at first.

A Conversation with John H. Mills

Greg Van Beek recalls the Mills Brothers.

Recently I had the pleasure of speaking with the son, grandson, and nephew of the original Mills Brothers members, John H. Mills. This was made possible by ICC member Anthony DiFlorio III.

For more than an uninterrupted 75 years, the magical appeal of the eloquent music of The Mills Brothers has attracted adoring audiences worldwide. The magic continues unabated today under the leadership of John Mills, son of Donald Mills, the longest active member of the famous vocal group. John recreates the inimitable sounds of The Mills Brothers while vocalizing the multitude of hit songs that made them famous. Donald Mills achieved the unprecedented accomplishment of being recorded and broadcast in every decade from the 1920's through the 1990's, compiling a discography of well over 2000 recordings!



John H. Mills

First, a little background on this famous group. The Mills Brothers began as a novelty act, debuting at the Mays Opera House in Piqua, Ohio. Thanks to their distinctive harmonies, the group went on to sell tens of millions of recordings. They received a Grammy Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1998. Among their memorable portfolio of recordings "Tiger Rag," the original group's first hit from 1928, "Cab Driver," "Glow Worm," "Lazy River," "Yellow Bird," "Basin Street Blues," "Opus One," "Paper Doll" and many others. They had a certifiable hit each year between 1935 and 1947, and they kept coming through the mid-1960s with "Cab Driver." "Paper Doll" alone sold six million copies in its first release and it was just one of more than 2,000 recordings that produced at least three dozen legitimate hits. Their 1931 recording of "Tiger Rag" set a new precedent, as The Mills Brothers became the first vocal group in history to sell a million records!

The group was originally composed of four brothers: John Jr. (October 19, 1910 – January 23, 1936) bass vocalist and guitarist; Herbert (April 2, 1912 – April 12, 1989) tenor; Harry (August 9, 1913 – June 28, 1982) baritone; and Donald (April 29, 1915 – November 13, 1999) lead tenor. Their father was John Hutchinson (February 11, 1882 – December 8, 1967)

In 1934, The Mills Brothers became the first African-Americans to give a command performance before British royalty. They performed at the Regal Theatre for a special audience: King George V, Queen Mary, and their mother. While performing in England, John Jr. became ill. It took him months to recover from battling pneumonia. Before he was completely well, the brothers returned to England. John Jr. once again became sick and died in the beginning of 1936. The remaining brothers considered breaking up, but their mother told them John Jr. would want them to continue. They followed her suggestion and their father, John Sr. replaced John Jr. as the baritone and tuba. At this time, Norman Brown joined the Brothers as their guitar player. In 1957, John Sr., who was 68, stopped touring with the group, and the quartet became a trio. As a trio, Herbert, Harry and Donald continued performing on the oldies

circuit until Harry's death in 1982. Herbert and Donald continued until Herbert's death in 1989. After the death of Harry and the subsequent retirement of Herbert, Donald and son John toured together for the next 18 years.

The parade of Mills Brothers' recordings continued into the 1990s, when John and his father released their own CD, "Still…There's You," a compilation of some of the original group's greatest songs and new material composed by John. Upon the hospitalization of Donald F. Mills, Sr., Elmer Hopper joined forces with Donald's son John H. Mills, in June of 1999. Forming this newest generation of The Mills Brothers, John and Elmer present a singular recreation of music that has been universally embraced by audiences since 1922. Elmer Hopper spent 21 years with The Platters. In 1974, at the age of nineteen, Elmer was trained personally by Paul Robi, (the baritone of the original group.) He accompanied Paul on an international tour spanning the globe from Japan and China, to Canada and Australia in what was said to be the best ensemble of The Platters since the group's inception.

We began our conversation discussing Bing Crosby...

GVB: Let's begin by talking about Bing Crosby, specifically, your personal memories of Bing. Did you meet him?

JHM: Several times. Bing and my dad were very good friends. Bing had some years on them in age, but they got to know him as young kids really in their teens and did all of those early CBS radio shows with him. I'm going to guess maybe as early as 1930 or 31, maybe 1929, but certainly by 1930-31 they were doing broadcasts and recordings together. They just stayed friends forever.

GVB: What were your own impressions of him as a person and performer?

JHM: Well I mean he sure could sing, huh! The guy had a delivery that even today… I mean anytime you heard him you knew who it was. There was no guessing. He had that immediate recognition, and I think that speaks volumes of any artist. He was always just better than really good. And of course he did quite an array of different types of music, and a lot of artists don't get the opportunity to do that anymore. A lot of times artists get locked into a certain style for commercial viability, but Crosby, like the Mills Brothers, did some Hawaiian stuff, some 'cutesy' stuff, or some love ballads, or the things he did in movies, he just ran the gamut, but he was always Crosby.

GVB: Jack Kapp at Decca had a lot to do with that, not just for Bing, but for The Mills Brothers as well. Kapp created a niche for Bing in genres of music that wouldn't necessarily have paid attention to him previously. He really was the first pop singer to have such a varied repertoire.

JHM: That's right, same thing with the guys, and I think they were very fortunate to come through that era, in my opinion. They did what they could during those years and then things started becoming more target marketed, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but just my observation.

GVB: Did you attend the taping of the Hollywood Palace TV show for New Years Eve in 1966 that Bing hosted and the Mills Brothers were guests on?

The Mills Brothers sing "Paper Doll" with Bing on the Hollywood Palace show.

JHM: You know, I think I may have been there, but I went to so many things. In '66 I was still pretty young, but still impressionable, but the thing that sticks out in my mind is the 50th anniversary thing he did out here at the Ambassador Auditorium (in Pasadena). I used to try to go to as many tapings as I could when I was out of school and allowed to go, but that one kind of rings a

bell that you just mentioned. Who were some of the other guests on that show?

GVB: There was Dorothy Collins, Skitch Henderson, Charles Aznavour. They did a medley at the close of some of the hit songs of 1966, like "Winchester Cathedral", "Strangers in the Night", "That's Life"...

JHM: That's some classic stuff there.

GVB: In 1975, the Mills Brothers celebrated their 50th anniversary in show business, and I have a date of September 21, 1975 during which Bing attended the Mills Brothers Charity Show at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion celebrating the milestone anniversary.

JHM: Definitely remember that. That was great. The tragic thing for me is that it wasn't videotaped or filmed or televised. I don't think anyone got any footage on it, and that was criminal. It was just a gorgeous gala affair. The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is still one of the pristine properties in Los Angeles. Just an elegant affair, Harry Von Zell was there, I don't know if you remember that name...

GVB: Oh yes, he actually was the announcer for Bing's first solo radio broadcast in 1931.

JHM: And another one who was a very close friend with Bing and with the guys. He came out and then Bing came out. It was just a very special, wonderful, wonderful concert. I remember that one very well.

GVB: Other guests besides Harry Von Zell included Johnny Green and Helen O'Connell with an orchestra lead by Louie Bellson providing support. Bing sings "Out of Nowhere" accompanied by Johnny Green and then lip synch's "That's What Life Is All About" as the orchestra does not have an arrangement of the song. The Mills Brothers then join Bing and they sing "Dinah" together. Bing receives a standing ovation as he leaves the stage.

JHM: Yeah, that sounds about right to me. And Bing was always recording, these guys recorded forever, didn't they. And of course, Louie Bellson, they go so far back. It was just a spectacular night. I got to work with Louie myself the years I worked with my dad, and Ray Brown and so many of those guys. I wasn't working with them then as yet but I certainly remember that show. Crosby was always just a good friend to my dad and my uncles. They always knew how each career benefited from the other during those early days.

GVB: This is going to put you on the spot and I'm sure you won't know the exact date, but Wikipedia suggests that this took place in 1976, while other sources cite the September 1975 date. Do you know which is correct?

JHM: Well, I mean I don't have anything in front of me to verify it, but either way it wouldn't be too far off. The 50th anniversary year, if you go by 1975, would've been 1925, and truthfully, The Mills Brothers formed the quartet in 1922, but in '25, to the best of my knowledge, they did their first radio performances over WLW in Cincinnati. So '75 seems fine, it would be legit, but the year they went to CBS in New York it may have been marking that as well, so I'll just say my guess would be 1975, as accurate as any.

GVB: There are some conflicting reports that Bing hosted the show. Is that true or was he just a guest?

JHM: Well Bing just being there is as big of a nicety as it could've been. My recollection would be more Harry Von Zell, because that was his thing. He was such a great host. We're going back a lot of years even for me so my memory might not be so accurate, but it just seems to play in my mind more correctly that Harry was more of an emcee. I'm not saying that Crosby might've taken over the night once he stepped on stage, but I would've thought that Harry would've been a perfect liaison between the announcing of the artists coming out. Makes sense, doesn't it?

GVB: Yes it does. I find it interesting that Bing might've sung the song "Out of Nowhere", which was one of his very early hits and one he didn't tackle too often since the 1931 recording.

JHM: These guys have done so many recordings, and if it were something that he did in 1931, he certainly would've been often times with The Mills Brothers whether it's in radio or different performances. It may have been something they all were just fond of him doing and he did it for that purpose. Like a personal thing.

GVB: Sure. You mentioned that the concert wasn't filmed, do you know if an audio recording was made?

JHM: Man if you could find that... even a bootleg would be nice to have! That was just tragic. I was too young to have my hands in the business side of things. If I had been as involved with it as I eventually became I certainly would've lobbied hard and passed for that. But even by 1975, as television goes, it was still a tough market for black guys. It wasn't as common or as normal as it is today being done. Not trying to put that spin on it but just a truthful observation. The King Sisters or The King Family, or The Osmonds, or Andy Williams, there were a lot of things that some artists were able to get done and others weren't. And as big of stars as the Mills Brothers were, I would've thought that could've gotten done, but I'm not surprised that it wasn't if I can safely say.

GVB: This one I think you know something about.

Two years later, on March 3, 1977, Bing taped a TV special celebrating his 50th anniversary in show business in Pasadena, and the Mills Brothers were among his guests, marking the final time they worked together. Bing suffered a 25 foot fall from the stage at the end of the performance, suffering a ruptured disc from which he never fully recovered and contributed to his death 6 months later. Were you in attendance for this performance?

JHM: Yeah he took a heck of a fall. The Ambassador Auditorium had at the time an elevator pit, that could be raised or lowered, and a portion of it had

been lowered. I don't know if it was supposed to be or not. But I know Bing stepped back and took a terrible fall. It was frightening, and he recovered, but I remember that like it was yesterday. That was a great show too, I believe Bette Midler was on that show, the divine Miss M as we called her, and Paul Anka, yeah that was a lot of fun, and of course Bing, you know, whether he was doing television or live, he always had great musicians and orchestra leaders and stuff, so I wouldn't be surprised that if you had a chance to see who worked on that it was the who's who or certainly the first call of Los Angeles' great musicians.

The advertising for the Pasadena show.

GVB: The orchestra leader was actually a dear friend of mine, Nick Perito. As Nick told me, the accident was at the close of the show and the portion of the stage behind Bing had been lowered, and at the last minute they told Bing to exit down the steps through the audience. But evidently acting on instinct, Bing stepped back to head towards the wings when he fell into the opening on the stage.

JHM: Oh yeah, that was a real fright for sure.

GVB: So you were there that night?

JHM: Oh yeah, absolutely. Rehearsals as well. I mean that was my cup of tea, I loved the backstage rehearsal stuff. The shows were always good, but I liked to see the nitty gritty and people get to work. I want to see Bette Midler come out in curlers and not her gown.

GVB: That was great, because Bette joined the Mills Brothers to perform "Glow Worm".

JHM: Did she do that?

GVB: Yes, she came out and sang the verse, and then the backdrop parted and there were the Mills Brothers to join in on the chorus.

JHM: Yeah I remember that. That sounds about right.

GVB: Pearl Bailey was on the show and sang "Gone Fishin'" with Bing

JHM: Sure, well of course, Pearl and Louie Bellson, I mean you're talking about the circle of friends that was endless and thick as thieves. And for so many years, not just for show biz photos. They all came through the thick of it together and I'm sure had great admiration, enduring admiration for each other.

GVB: Absolutely, and my favorite part of the show, and I'm sure yours too, is when Bing joined the Mills Brothers to sing "Dinah". Nick Perito did a great job of recreating the original arrangement used on their 1931 recording and it was just a wonderful thing. Bing even took the scat chorus!

JHM: I remember that, and he did a great job! That's my point, he (Bing) could handle his business and was at ease with it.

GVB: The Mills Brothers' harmony never ceases to amaze me in how close knit they were and how perfect it was, live performances or recordings.

JHM: Thank you. They were one of a kind, without a doubt.

GVB: Could you share some of your father's memories of Bing, be it personally or professionally? What did he have to say about working with Bing?

JHM: Just like with Bob Hope and stuff, you know my dad is the only guy I know who would say to Bob Hope, "How are you doing, Robert?" Who calls Bob Hope 'Robert', you know! These guys, they were just friends, and you know I'm sure they had so many inside stories because you have to remember radio was not television, but the shows had to start on time, people could cover for you. They could help each other get through different situations as long as they could pull it off to the listening audience. But the one thing I did admire about Crosby is regards to golf. Bing became an integral part of the growth of the PGA, and so many celebrities had their names attached to different tournaments. And of course his for so many years at Pebble Beach. They used to call it the clambake.

The Mills Brothers were always avid golfers, and they all played. When Harry lost more of his eyesight than he retained, the most difficult thing for him was that he couldn't play golf anymore. They had all of those years of doing that together. But from the professional end of it, they used to do what they called invitationals. And in terms of civil rights, often times these invitationals became a way of excluding professional golfers of color from being able to participate in these

tournaments. I know that back in the day, guys like Rafe Botts, Charlie Sifford of course. The sponsors that they had were people like The Mills Brothers or Billy Eckstine. You can imagine back then it wasn't like today where people travel by private plane. A lot of times they couldn't even get off of the bus to eat lunch. So The Mills Brothers made sure these guys went with some money and sometimes just a simple thing like food.

Anyhow, to make a long story short, and tying it back into Bing, Charlie Sifford had certainly been playing well enough to get into the Pebble Beach tournament, but there was a lot of resistance in allowing him to get in. But because of Bing's friendship with my dad and Harry and Herb back then, they petitioned hard for Charlie to get into that tournament, and I believe what happened was as long as Harry played as the celebrity in that foursome, they were able to get Charlie into that tournament. I know this, not through my dad or through Charlie, but Rafe Botts told me that in recent years when I saw him down in Palm Springs. These are the kind of things that don't become public; no one was looking for any credit, and they won't be marked down as a significant moment in civil rights matters, but I know, and while I know if anybody asks me I'll tell them so they can know. So that's a little something that I'll always admire Mr. Crosby for.

GVB: Actually it goes back even further to 1931 when Bing and The Mills Brothers joined the CBS radio network. A couple of years later, Bing started a series for Woodbury soap, and The Mills Brothers were regulars on the show, and I believe that's the first time African American and white performers shared the bill on a weekly radio series.

JHW: I wouldn't be surprised. I know that when they went into CBS, many of the shows they did certainly were with Bing, and I know some with Kate Smith. Bing was as big as any of them, and I know that those moments, besides professionally extraordinary, were also personally rewarding, and, as I said, they always remained friends all their lives.

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It was my pleasure to talk with John H. Mills, and my thanks once again to ICC member Anthony DiFlorio III for making it all possible. I would encourage you to check out the "official" Mills Brothers website, www.themillsbrothers.com for more information on the history of this legendary vocal group, as well as current tour dates where you can see John and Elmer Hopper performing those classic songs, and also the place where you purchase Mills Brothers CD's and DVD's.

Greg Van Beek

CHARLES LaVERE

In our last issue, we carried an article called "Monday, June 1st 1942" and among the John Scott Trotter Orchestra musicians listed was a pianist named Charles LaVere. By coincidence, a few weeks after the magazine hit the streets, your editor received the following email.

"I am interested in searching the various pages of the online BING Magazine for mentions of my father, Charlie LaVere, who, as I'm sure you know, served as Bing's regular pianist between the years 1939 and 1947.

Is there a way to do that?

Thanks for your help.

Steve LaVere"

I replied as shown.

"Sadly, your father does not have many mentions in BING magazine which is an omission I would be happy to remedy if you would like to write something about his association with Bing. By coincidence though, he cropped up in an article in our latest issue of BING magazine which I reproduce below.

Also if you go to the BING magazine web site, click on the "Day by Day" link and then choose chapter 6. You will find him on December 12, 1940 and on May 2, 1945."

Steve LaVere quickly responded saying:

"Thanks for your reply...and for checking the magazine for citations. I had already located the earlier date, as I knew of his appearance on KMH as part of the series to showcase members of the orchestra. And although I was aware of the John L spots and the date on which they were recorded, I didn't have quite the detail provided by the listing. IOW, thanks for all that.

Your inclusion of the info surrounding the 6-1-42 record date is interesting. Thank you very much for attaching it. Years ago, Serena Williams, then secretary of the local, considered me their unofficial historian and during that time, when the archives of Local 47 were open to all comers, I was able, at my leisure, to search, locate and copy many documents relating to my father's career in general and his association with Bing in particular. Now, of course, it's much more difficult, fees are now involved and to the surprise and consternation of Ms. Williams, many of the ancillary documents (like daily radio program reports) were inadvertently discarded. Nevertheless, I copied nearly everything I knew about and wanted before the opportunities became so limited. Consequently, I have copies of the contracts, reports and bills which are referenced in the article. Much of the later documentation of record sessions did not mention tune titles, so a good deal of additional research and even guess work is necessary. However, Decca, for one, did provide them in their own documentation of their sessions

and often as not, they are included in the local's files.

BTW, C.A. Crandall is correct. He is listed in the 1945 Local 47 directory as residing in Glendale. I remember seeing and hearing his name a lot. Also, your note re the Music Maids and Hal not being listed is true to form. Vocalists are hardly ever listed on Union documents as their contributions to the recordings fell outside the purview of the Musician's Union.

Steve LaVere"

My contact with Steve encouraged me to do a little more research into his father. I was aware that he played piano in JST's orchestra from 1939 to 1947 but I didn't realise that he had had a No. 1 record as a vocalist! But first, some more background.

Charles LaVere, a multi-talented musician, arranger and composer, was born Charles LaVere Johnson in Salina, Kansas, on July 18, 1910 and died in Ramona, California, on April 28, 1983. He played piano from the age of seven and was educated at the College of Fine Arts and the University of Oklahoma. Apart from his prowess on piano, he also became a self-taught performer on many brass and reed instruments Some of the highlights of his early career are as follows: He played alto sax in Herb Cook's Oklahoma Joy Boys with Charlie Teagarden on trumpet and gigged around Oklahoma City (1930-2). LaVere went to Bermuda with Sam Robbins (1931), playing trombone before the Prince of Wales and later led his own all-star recording group in Chicago (1935): Preston Jackson, Joe Marsala, Boyce Brown, Jess Stacy, Zutty Singleton, and Jabbo Smith, with whom he sang and recorded the first inter-racial blues vocal recording in the history of jazz.

In Los Angeles, he joined Frank Trumbauer (1938), and then began extensive work in radio and recording studios in Hollywood, first with Skinnay Ennis, then Victor Young, John Scott Trotter and Gordon Jenkins, regularly accompanying Bing, Bob Hope, Dick Haymes and a host of other stars (1939-50). His million-seller recording in 1948 was as a vocalist on 'Maybe You'll Be There' (Gordon Jenkins' first hit).

Jazz aficionados remember LaVere's Chicago Loopers (1944-50) for the set of irresistible recordings made with a studio group featuring Jack Teagarden, Billy May, Matty Matlock, George Van Eps, Floyd O'Brien and little-known cornetist Rico Vallese. Recorded in four sessions, these titles have become the definition of Dixieland perfection; the superbly arranged "Carolina in the Morning" and LaVere's own lovely "It's All in Your Mind" are highlights, but all sixteen tracks are essential listening. LaVere later played at Disneyland (1955-9) and with Bob Crosby, but his Chicago Loopers remain his seminal contribution to jazz history.

John Scott Trotter certainly attracted some top-class musicians to his Orchestra! And if you want to see Charles LaVere in action, get out your copy of *Here Comes the Groom* and in the wedding rehearsal scene, you'll see him boogying up the Wedding March!

Charles LaVere plays a lively version of the Wedding March in *Here Comes the Groom*.

Nathaniel Crosby Remembers His Father's Tournament

The AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am took place in February and as usual the media mentioned Bing in connection with it. One such article was by Steve Eubanks on the PGA.com site on 5th February.

There's no better way to age yourself than to refer to this week's PGA Tour event as the Crosby. It's like saying a couple is "courting" or calling that team from New Jersey the New York Football Giants. Not only does nobody talk that way anymore, the youngsters in the crowd have no idea what those throwback terms mean.

But for men of a certain age, mentioning the Crosby opens a flood of fond memories from a time when tournaments carried celebrity instead of corporate monikers. There were the Rat Pack events—the Dean Martin Tucson Open and Sammy Davis Jr. Greater Hartford Open – and tournaments named after singers and dancers and actors like the Glen Campbell Los Angeles Open and the Jackie Gleason Inverrary Classic. Even Andy Williams, who passed away this year, carried the mantle for the Torrey Pines event for a number of years.

The godfather of them all, of course, was the Bing Crosby Pro-Am, an event Mr. Crosby created in 1937 as a California clambake, a party where his professional golfer friends could make a little money and rub shoulders with Hollywood's elite.

Every February, the Crosby was introduced to

viewers with Bing crooning "Straight Down the Middle"—the first-ever golf song from the 1948 film "Honor Caddy," that Bing starred in with Bob Hope, Ben Hogan and Sam Snead. *(Editor: The song used in the film was "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day.")* And every year stars like Jack Nicholson, Clint Eastwood, Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau teed off with Nicklaus, Palmer, Trevino, Miller and the like.

Bing flirted with scratch golf and played in the British Amateur at St. Andrews and the U.S. Amateur at Winged Foot (both appearances drew Tiger-like crowds). He received the USGA's Bob Jones Award in 1970 and inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1978, a year after passing away from cardiac arrest as he walked off the 18th green of a golf course in Spain. His last words were, "That was a great game of golf, fellas."

In addition to being the creator of the modern-day pro-am, Crosby is remembered as being a world-class gentleman, the kind of guy who wore fame like a comfortable pair of shoes. He would strike up a conversation with anybody, and felt just as at ease riding the subway to baseball games in New York as teeing off with kings and presidents. He took Ben Hogan elk hunting and showed up in Dublin, Ohio in 1976 to help Jack Nicklaus launch his fledgling Memorial Tournament. He would grill steaks at his home for players and would wait in line at Candlestick Park for a hotdog and beer after singing the National Anthem.

In short, he was the most down-to-earth famous guy you'd ever want to meet. On that front, Bing's youngest son didn't fall far from the tree.

At age 51, Nathaniel Crosby still speaks of the game with a childlike enthusiasm reminiscent of his days as a top amateur and European Tour pro. Back then Nathaniel was considered the greatest quote in any field, a sound-bite machine who could tell first-hand golf stories about everyone from Fred Astaire to Randolph Scott.

A gracious and a breezy conversationalist, he still has a quick, self-deprecating wit. "I had back surgery, a discectomy, four years ago, and what they didn't put in the brochure was that I would lose 50 yards off the tee," he said. "My clubhead speed is hovering around 68 miles an hour. I'd love to play competitively again, but I've got 80-year-olds outdriving me now."

Even though he was a tour player, an equipment executive at three different golf companies, and one of the pioneers of the golf infomercial, Nathaniel is still remembered for a tournament he won at age 19.

Ask anyone over 50 to name the two most memorable televised U.S. Amateurs and the answer will be: Tiger's win over Steve Scott at Pumpkin Ridge and Nathaniel Crosby's 1981 victory at Olympic Club in San Francisco. He was already a celebrity then, having appeared in 11 of his father's Christmas specials over the years. And he was the family face of the Crosby Pro-Am after Bing's death. So when Nathaniel wore Bing's 1940 U.S. Amateur identification badge and rubbed it like Aladdin's lamp during his dramatic 37-hole one-up victory over Brian Lindley, it was one of the most dramatic television moments in U.S. Amateur history.

Nathaniel presents the Remy Martin Cup to Dr. Barry Ruhl at the 1982 Crosby Pro-Am.

Fans didn't have to be swatted with cane poles to keep them off fairways as they were when Bing played at Winged Foot, but it was one of the largest amateur galleries on record and certainly one of the most enthusiastic.

The next year, Nathaniel won another USGA medal, edging out Corey Pavin for low amateur in the 1982 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach—the one Tom Watson won with the famous chip-in at 17. After that, he played three years in Europe. It was then that his mom, Kathryn, got into a spat with the tour over invitations to the tournament. Bing's name was pulled, and hasn't been back since.

"It's disappointing in a way that the original contributors get pushed aside in lieu of corporate title sponsors," Nathaniel said. "To me Byron Nelson, Ben Hogan, Bob Hope and my dad, they're all in the World Golf Hall of Fame, so I think that corporate sponsors would want to associate with those Hall of Fame legacies to add continuity and a sense of history to their event. But that's not the way of the world right now.

"Dad still gets some recognition every year when the event rolls around. So, I think everybody is comfortable with that. I do think it's a little harsh that the year Dolores (Hope) died, the Hope name came off what is

now the Humana [Challenge], but I also understand the need for sponsors."

No one has to explain the ways of business to Nathaniel. He ran Toney Penna Golf and then Nicklaus Equipment Company, growing that business from a start-up to $25 million in sales. But it was as CEO of Orlimar Golf where he became a bona fide player in the equipment business. After preaching the virtues of the televised infomercial like an evangelical revivalist, Nathaniel took Orlimar from $1.2 million to $103 million in sales in one calendar year.

"It was lightning in a bottle," he said. "We shipped $93 million in product in six and half months. It was incredible being part of that experience, but I had to start experimenting with hard liquor to get through the days. I'd always been a beer drinker, but I thought, boy, I need something a little stronger to get through this. I had retailers calling me upset that they didn't get enough or that Costco had just gotten the product. I had guards at my gate. It was an intense year, but I still have a passionate belief that direct-response advertising can work."

He also has a passionate belief that his dad's legacy will be revitalized as new generations discover Bing Crosby on YouTube, NetFlix, and Pandora. Hopefully that revitalization will carry over to the Crosby Pro-Am, even as the number of people who remember Bing's sweet swing continues to dwindle.

"Dad subsidized (the tournament) for years, and when he died in 1977, the probate officers viewed it as a liability instead of an asset, which was unfortunate," Nathaniel said. "The second we turned it over to the PGA Tour to finance, we lost ownership. We could have struck a deal for half the amateur spots back when it was sacrilegious to assume Dad's name would not be associated with it, but that didn't happen. Any time you get the wrong lawyers in a room at the wrong time, bad things come out of it."

He will follow the event of course, although he hasn't played since his back surgery. "I played for 23 years," he said. "It's time for other people to enjoy it rather than me."

He still enjoys the game, though. A member at Seminole in Palm Beach and San Francisco Golf Club near his mom's home, he is still one of the most affable golf partners at both places.

"It's one of my great privileges," he said, completely obvious to the irony of his own words.

But then, humility is something to be expected. It runs in the family.

Steve Eubanks

(Editor: Another related article appeared in the Las Vegas Review-Journal on February 6th and this time Bing's niece Carolyn Schneider was featured.)

For niece, original Bing still tops charts

With all respect due Bing, the Internet search engine, and Dave Bing, the former NBA star and current mayor of Detroit, there can be only one Bing, and his last name was Crosby. This was a man who swung on a star. He had 383 record-chart singles and 41 No. 1 hits, which is a lot more than Beyonce and Justin Bieber and even Alice Cooper, and there never will be a "White Christmas" without him.

He could act, too: In 1944, he won the Academy Award for Best Actor. Bing Crosby was like Bo Jackson, without the Nike deal and the bum hip.

He was quite the sportsman, having once been an assistant football coach at his alma mater of Gonzaga (this would have been years before Adam Morrison cried during the NCAA Tournament) and part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates, from 1946 until the time he died. He loved to watch the ponies run; he was on the board of directors at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, where the surf meets the turf near San Diego.

And he loved his golf.

In 1937, Bing Crosby started this tournament, the National Pro-Am Golf Championship, in California. Sam Snead won. He earned a check for $500. The National Pro-Am wasn't about the money, though it was about the clams. About baking clams. That's what they called it, the Crosby Clambake.

Just as the attitude at a clambake is mellow and laid back, you didn't fret over missing a short birdie putt at Bing's Clambake; you didn't hurl your 7-iron into the Pacific Ocean off the Monterey Peninsula after slicing one. You laughed about it afterward, over cocktails, at the Del Monte Lodge at Pebble Beach.

After Bing Crosby died in 1977, his Clambake morphed into the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

Usually when you gain capital letters and ampersands, you lose the mellowness and laid-back attitude. Now it's not about the clams, it's about the money, even if they do occasionally let Bill Murray yuk it up on the front nine during the early rounds.

This is why Carolyn Schneider doesn't go to Pebble Beach during the first week of February anymore. It's just not the same without Bing. Without her Uncle Bing.

Carolyn Schneider's mother, Mary Rose Crosby Pool, was Bing Crosby's sister.

Carolyn lives in Summerlin with her husband, Dirk, who paints pictures of pueblos and other Southwestern landscapes. She has written two books about Uncle Bing, the second of which, "Bing: On the Road to Elko" she signed for me after I was through looking at the photos of Mary Rose and Phil Harris and Danny Kaye and President Gerald Ford and Arnold Palmer and a tanned James Garner and Andy Williams and Lawrence Welk and Vin Scully and Glen Campbell and Alan

Shepard. And of a lot of people named Crosby, but not the one who shot J.R.

Everybody looked so young and fit and tanned and healthy in their Ban-Lon shirts and golf things. Especially Garner.

"It was just the atmosphere of the Crosby," Carolyn Schneider said as we pored over those old photos, taking king-sized divots from the past on her dining room table. "It was by invitation only. Golfers would kill to get an invitation to the Crosby, whether they were pros or amateurs or celebrities.

"Uncle Bing didn't want any egomaniacs, guys who were going to throw their clubs. There was just a lot of camaraderie, and that was the atmosphere."

Every time Carolyn Schneider referred to Bing Crosby as "Uncle Bing," I sort of chuckled, because how many people have an Uncle Bing? I mean, how cool is that? Even if Dave Bing were your uncle, he'd be Uncle Dave, not Uncle Bing. And yeah, you could ask about Boeheim hogging the ball when they played at Syracuse, and about the size of Lanier's feet, but I'll bet he couldn't sing "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" like Bing Crosby could, because nobody could. Not even Sinatra.

It was really cool listening to her tell stories about her Uncle Bing and his golf pals; it was almost like having my mom and dad's old LPs come to life right there. I could almost hear Rosemary Clooney singing, scratches and all.

And when I thanked her for hauling out those photo albums, and for sharing the stories, and asked why she would do it for a stranger, she did not ponder or hesitate as if the question were a tricky downhill putt for the Big Check, or a clam that still needed baking.

Carolyn looks over old photos at her home in Las Vegas.

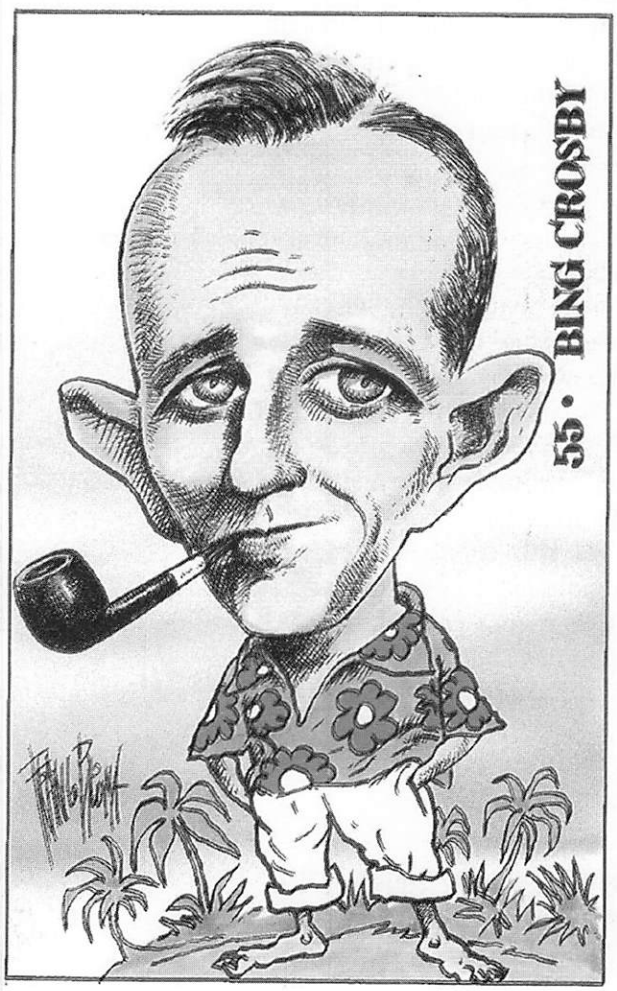
"The reason I do this ... and this ... and this," she said, nodding to the photos, and the autographed books about her Uncle Bing, and the replica of the denim tuxedo jacket the Levi's people tailored for him when he owned those ranches up in Elko, "is to keep his memory and his legacy alive. To repay him for his kindness to me, if that's possible."

I asked what her famous uncle would have made of Tiger Woods. "I think Uncle Bing would have admired his great golfing skills," she said, which I think was a nice way of saying her Uncle Bing wouldn't have cared very much for Tiger glowering at people in the gallery who try to take his picture.

And then I shared a story with her: How now, in lieu of sending out Christmas cards, I just copy the computer link to the YouTube video of her Uncle Bing and David Bowie singing "The Little Drummer Boy" to the iPhones on my list, because when those two harmonize during the "Peace on Earth" part, it still makes me feel all warm and tingly inside.

Ron Kantowski

(Las Vegas Review-Journal sports columnist Ron Kantowski can be reached at rkantowski@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0352. Follow him on Twitter: @ronkantowski)



TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series of CDs remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $18.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £11 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has a supply of the book "Alternate Bing Crosby" by Colin Pugh which was published in 1988. Running to 159 pages, it gives details of the many alternate takes Bing made. If you would like a copy, send £3.50 to Michael Crampton. Europe and Ireland members should send £4.50. There are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances and Michael is offering these at the hugely discounted price of only £5.99 including postage. Also Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal figure.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video. Festival Films has recently re-released "On the Road with Bing and Bob" with 3 added films and they have a new DVD called "Golf Mania".

McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640, USA (Orders only Tel: 800-253-2187, email: info@mcfarlandpub.com)

Members will recall that Ken Crossland and your Editor wrote an award-winning book called **"Perry Como-A Biography and Complete Career Record"** a year or two back. The book has now been released as a softcover and as an ebook. Cost $25. Print ISBN: 978-0-7864-7166-9, Ebook ISBN: 978-1-4766-0024-6. The book has 73 photos, discography, bibliography, index. 310pp. softcover (7 x 10). A Google search should find it easily but if not go to:

www.mcfarlandpub.com/book-2.php?id=978-0-7864-7166-9

Bob Moore, The Cottage, Jesmond Avenue, Blackpool FY4 1EJ, UK (Tel: 01253 342317)

Bob wishes to dispose of 19 Bing 78s with titles such as "Domino", "Small Fry", "Granada", "I Apologise" and "Swanee River". All are said to be in first class condition. Contact Bob if interested.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 [Tues/Wed & Fridays: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. only],
email: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing and other easy listening artists' CDs, please contact Ray.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) www.worldsrecords.com/

We were sorry to hear that Worlds Records, which has been open since 1974, is going out of business. They will be open until their inventory is gone so don't delay.

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Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. The film night for December 3 featured *White Christmas* and a Bing Christmas TV Special with Mary Martin, Andre Previn etc. The next film night on February 18 had *Blue Skies* and "Rosemary Clooney - Singing at her Best" as the attractions. Future film nights are scheduled for April 15, June 17, August 19, October 21 and December 2. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and clips from Bing's films. The site has much superb material on it, particularly in the video and audio archives, and it is well worth devoting some time to it. Over recent months, many of Bing's Decca recordings have been added to the Bing Crosby Radio slot on the site and there are now nearly 2000 tracks streaming 24/7. Also Gord Atkinson's "Crosby Years" series can now be found in the audio archive.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and there is also a discussion facility. Over 79,000 people have "liked" the site which is absolutely fantastic 36 years after Bing's passing. If only they would all buy a Bing CD! If they did, we should have Bing back in the charts in a big way.

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for a new site which appeared in January. Lots of useful tweets. It has 842 followers at present.

@Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 1366 followers as we go to press.

YouTube

Bing Crosby Enterprises has its own channel at YouTube with many Bing videos in evidence. Go to:

http://www.youtube.com/user/BingCrosbyEnterprise

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography", Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" and Malcolm Macfarlane's "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" can be accessed. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Maintained by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so.

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Tony Meade's blog

Tony has an interesting and varied site at http://bingsphotos.blogspot.co.uk/

Books 'n' Bing

1. Beverly Garland - *Her Life and Career*

By Deborah Del Vecchio. Published by McFarland, Print ISBN: 978-0-7864-6501-9, Ebook ISBN: 978-0-7864-9023-3, 40 photos, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 255pp. softcover (7 x 10). $40.00

Named "Television's First Lady" by Walter Ames of the *Los Angeles Times*, actress Beverly Garland (1926-2008) is also regarded as a Western and science-fiction film icon. Beverly was TV's first "police woman" in the landmark series *Decoy*, and was seen in starring or recurring roles in such popular shows as *My Three Sons* and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*. In addition to more than 700 television appearances, she made more than 55 feature and made-for-television films including the cult classics *Not of This Earth, It Conquered the World* and *The Alligator People*.

Working with such stars as Sinatra, Bogart, and Bing, Beverly Garland had fascinating stories to tell about all of them and many more. This comprehensive biography of Beverly's life and career includes a foreword and afterword by her colleagues Joseph Campanella and Peggy Webber plus a chapter devoted to "The Bing Crosby Show". The author, Deborah Del Vecchio, who is a freelance writer living in New Jersey, has some nice things to say about Bing.

"The Bing Crosby Show went into production around the 15th of June *(1964)* on Stage 7, where Desilu-Gower Studios had soundstages they had leased from Paramount. Crosby, an avid golfer, could often be seen practicing his game using a steel-framed net sent over by his thoughtful "landlady" Lucille Ball. He also had a bicycle parked just outside the stage door so he could ride over to Stages 8 and 9 where his other two productions, *Ben Casey* and *Slattery's People*, were shooting. As part of her contract, Beverly received $5000 to decorate her dressing room on the set.

Beverly with her on-screen husband

Set visitors would often find Crosby and Frank McHugh using the time between scenes to play an improvised game of trivia where each would try to outdo the other recalling obscure or famous vaudeville performers and the songs they performed in their acts.

Beverly marveled at Bing's photographic memory, "He was the kind of person who could sit down and look at a script in the morning and he would memorize all the lines. He was a great sports buff and he also remembered every star, every actor, just about everything from the 1920s and 1930s because that's when he started in the business."

She also recollected that Crosby was always on time for rehearsals and she never saw him lose his temper. "He's quiet on the set," she recounted to Charles Witbeck during an interview for King Feature Syndicate (February 14, 1965), "but knows what is going on all around him. Bing doesn't play the star bit. You never hear the phone ring for him or see secretaries come running out with papers to sign. If he wants something, he goes and gets it himself."

Beverley told Lydia Lane (*Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 1965), "Bing takes things so easy, but he has tremendous control. The only way you can tell when something is bothering him is that he doesn't sing or make jokes. You never know if he is elated or depressed. Bing hides his feelings. He's not an extrovert. He doesn't particularly like small talk but his mind is shooting along."

…One very often hears harrowing tales about the pressures of working on a weekly television series. However, this was apparently not the case on *The Bing Crosby Show*. Reporter Eleanor Roberts noted that during her set visit, she immediately noticed a "camaraderie that was rarely found on Hollywood sets." Bing would often been seen doing a time step or singing up a storm at the end of the work day. It was also widely-known that the show's work schedule called for a two-week break after four or five episodes were filmed, to give Crosby a chance to take care of his other business interests, spend time with his family and/or play golf. The cast and crew were required to work 12-hour average days, five days a week, to make up for the time lost during these frequent hiatuses."

BLUE OF THE NIGHT MEETS GOLD OF THE DAY

Leonard Feather was a British-born jazz pianist, composer, and producer, best known for his music journalism and other writing. In March 1976 he interviewed Bing for the *Los Angeles Times* the day after Bing did his Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Show. It makes interesting reading.

Though Bing Crosby's career took him through every area of show business, establishing him as a seminal influence on virtually all the male popular singers of the 1930's and '40's, the most significant aspect of his role is one that we tend now to take for granted. He made popular singing human.

His advent came at a time when most performers of popular songs tended to over interpret. This relic of the operetta era was promptly done away with by Bing and his early associates. Bing and his fellow Rhythm Boys (Harry Barris and Al Rinker) with Paul Whiteman's orchestra were considered a "hot" vocal trio in the days when "hot" was a synonym for jazz. Bing was teamed on records with such legendary jazzmen as Bix Beiderbecke and Frank Trumbauer; in 1932 he made a unique record of "St Louis Blues" in tandem with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

These accomplishments had little to do with his identification as a "crooner." The verb to croon, defined by Webster as "to sing in half voice, especially into a closely held microphone," was only a very partial and semi-accurate definition. What Crosby truly accomplished was the development of an unprecedentedly casual approach to the interpretation of the popular song. He brought to it a warmth and intimacy that came as a revelation in the era of Eddie Cantor and Al Jolson melodrama.

The interview that follows took place in a dressing room when Bing was taping a TV program at the NBC studios in Burbank in March of last year.

Leonard Feather: Why, over such a long period, have you done so few concerts?

Bing Crosby: Well, it was always quite an effort to get anything together in the way of an act, I always kind of shrank from just going out and singing some songs, because other people like Hope and Como, Williams and Bennett—they have a real act that they work on and prepare; they have a lot of material and a lot of staging, and I never had that kind of an act and didn't get around to preparing one, so I just never accepted the opportunity to do personal appearances.

But lately I've been doing an awfully lot of recording and I've built up quite a library of new arrangements and new things that furnished me with the

material I was lacking formerly.

Also, this tour—well, it's not a tour yet, but it's developing into one, because this concert at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion—I think this is the fourth one—gives me an opportunity to raise some money for charity quite painlessly.

Formerly, when I was making a very big income, I could deduct a sizable amount for charitable donations. Now I don't have that big an income, so that deduction is not available. You're only allowed to give to charity 30% of your income.

So I still wanted to keep up some of the charitable activities that I've been engaged in and meet some of the commitments I've made to some of the various organizations. So in order to do that, I made this tour, and after the expenses are paid, all the funds that are left go towards the charities.

Then the second consideration that influenced me was that this new family coming up (his teen-aged children) gets very little opportunity to work or to appear. They do a Christmas show, then they go back to school or back to their golf, or one thing and another, and they don't get another chance to really do anything. So they're not very expert, they're not very polished, they're not performers.

This kind of thing, although last night they did very little because we didn't have much chance to work with them ... for instance, in England we'll be doing two weeks at the Palladium, and I hope to get some material written by some good writers, that will involve the children with some things they can do.

Like Mary Frances is a very good dancer, Harry can play guitar, piano, sing; Nathaniel could do dialogue or whatever you want. So it gives them a chance to really work. And unless they work... you can rehearse and practice, but you can't get anywhere unless you get in front of an audience.

Feather: You haven't made a movie since *Stagecoach* in 1966, plus a couple of movies for TV.

Don't you plan to resume again?

Crosby: There are no parts for me in movies. At my age, I can't get involved romantically in a film.

I suppose I could be a character actor or something. It's true they are talking about making another *Road* picture. But something like that would need a little more insanity than the earlier ones—you know, like the Monty Python, Marty Feldman, wild, far-out, crazy stuff...because they're buying that now—Mel Brooks, the two things he made, you know—the kids go see those two or three times. That's what Bob Hope thought, so the writer took it back and he's getting another writer in who can do that kind of thing and then we'll take another look at it.

Feather: What kind of things have you been listening to lately? Here's a list of recent Billboard chart toppers. The No. 1 record is the Eagles. The next is Peter Frampton. How many of these have you heard of?

Crosby: (Scans list that includes David Bowie, Bad Company, Queen, Gary Wright, Fleetwood Mac, Phoebe Snow.) Well, I've heard of Dylan, of course; Carole King, of course—a good performer and a good writer; Bowie I don't know. Simon...is that Simon and Garfunkel? His work is great. I don't know this kid at all, but I understand he's very big. Or is it a girl?

Feather: Janis Ian.

Crosby: A girl?

Feather: yes. She's very good. There are a lot of unfamiliar names, right?

Crosby: Joan Baez?...I'm afraid I'm not very *au courant.* Denver I know. I hear this stuff on the radio on the car driving, and some of them are great. A great many of them are great.

Feather: What do you listen to personally, for pleasure, when you want to play a record?

Crosby: I don't really listen to records anymore, unless I want to learn a tune or something. We have a tape machine, a good one that I can't even run. Harry is the engineer in residence. The only thing I use are cassettes for rehearsals, if I have to learn some new tunes. But I don't think I've played a record in a long time.

Feather: Do you have any old jazz?

Crosby: I have them. Once in a while I play some old things that I like, on tape, that Harry gets. For instance, he's got a Duke Ellington tape. There're great things on there. There's a saxophone solo in there on "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good".

Feather: Johnny Hodges?

Crosby: Holy Toledo! That's a saxophone solo of all time. I just heard it for the first time the other day. I probably heard it years ago but didn't remember. But listening to it now, that must be the greatest saxophone solo ever played!

Feather: It was beautiful.

Crosby: Who was the tenor sax man who used to be with McKinney?

Feather: Coleman Hawkins?

Crosby: Yeah, he was great. Did some marvelous things. But this is fantastic what he .... he's really preaching, and really feeling it.

Feather: Most of those people have gone by now. Johnny Hodges is dead, and Coleman Hawkins. So many of the great jazz people of that generation. And Duke. 1 remember the record you made with Duke of the "St. Louis Blues."

Crosby: Yeah, that was a strange thing. I think I was working in Philadelphia at the Carmen Theater, and he was coming through town, going some place, and we did it in Camden, about 3 in the morning. It was the only time we could get together, because he had a date there and it was the only time—I think he was doing a lot of other things. And they said, "Let's go out and you sing a couple of songs with Duke." We were really exhausted, but very lively, for that time of night.

Feather: It was a memorable record. It was on a 12-inch 78 as I recall. That was almost before you started your own records, wasn't it?

Crosby: Well, it was while I was on tour. I had Eddie Lang on stage (the great jazz guitarist and accompanist) and Lennie Hayton conducting the orchestra. Do you have any idea of the year?

Feather: 1930.

With Eddie Lang (right) and Lennie Hayton

Crosby: That's when it was, huh? I had gone East to make a start on CBS sustaining radio, and after we did a few weeks, we started touring around. We had some band on that sustaining! We had Artie Shaw, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, Tommy Dorsey, Frankie Signorelli, and who was the drummer? Dick Burk. That was quite a band. And Jerry Colonna on trombone. He was a good trombone player.

So I really started with a good backup. Then I did a Cremo Cigar program for a few months with Carl Fenton, which was the name of another leader—it was the house orchestra. A big orchestra. And Eddie Lang and Venuti were in that. But the rest were just NBC house men,

Feather: Do you hear any jazz musicians around today who are in that class?

Crosby: No. I see some great jazz musicians, but they've gone into a progressive—what do you call it? And I just don't quite understand too much.

Feather: Herb Ellis is a fine guitarist.

Crosby: The best, I think. There's another fellow, Joe Pass, that's very good. I saw the two of them in concert, just him and Herb. It was up in Oakland. In fact, it was a concert of eight or ten of the great guitar players. And they did a segment, and they tore it up.

Feather: Did you ever try to play guitar?

Crosby: Oh, I could play ukulele. A few chords, and that's all. I have no facility for learning anything like that.

Feather: Well, I think the ear is all that matters.

Crosby: I have a pretty good ear. I can feel the beat, rhythm. Geez, we had a terrible time with rhythm on a few songs last night.

Feather: I saw your daughter and young Harry in the concert last night. Can you tell me what the older boys are doing?

Crosby: They're all busy. Gary does a lot of dramatic parts. Gary keeps working. He loves to work.

Phillip has a nightclub act. He's just been down to Australia. He does a lot of USO tours. He's got a helluva voice. He can really sing. But he's so lazy. Can't get up in the morning. Once in a while he shakes himself out and he'll do a little tour. He's got a little money his mother left him. He just works enough to keep in action.

Dennis, he's down in Palm Springs. He's got a little electronics development, he's working on. The other kid, Lindsay, he has horses he rents for westerns. He actually works in westerns once in a while. They've all got children. I've got 11 grandchildren now.

Feather: Where do you place yourself politically? You've been called a conservative by many people.

Crosby: Well, I don't have any real politics. I don't canvass for politics. I don't like the way it operates. I think we need a new system for electing presidents. I don't think the conventions are necessary.

I can't see this giving a candidate a million dollars to go out and campaign with public funds. I don't know why—take, for instance, presidential candidates. Once they're nominated, why can't the government just say to the networks, "You give each candidate 15 spots on television, free?" The government controls television, radio, the FCC. And let them get 15 times on the networks to state their position, debate if they want, and let people vote.

Why does the government have to give these guys a million dollars? I don't get it. They don't finance the candidates in England, do they, to go out and campaign?

Feather: Do you have a special love for England?

Crosby: Oh yes. London is my favorite city. In all the world. So much to do, to see. They have a great sense of humor, the cab drivers, the doormen, the people at the race track, golf course. Geez, they're funny! They love to gag and kid, even in spite of the troubled times they're going through. They're still going to cricket and the horse races. During the war, nobody could have withstood what they went through during the Second World War. The average nation would have collapsed. I don't know what we'd done if we got bombed like that. I love the whole scene in England.

I was talking to Douglas Fairbanks Jr. last night—he came backstage for a minute. He said that in New York, there're 24 shows running. In London there're 59. Of every kind. I'm talking of little, big ....

Feather: How do you find the general musical level in England? Has it improved?

Crosby: Oh, a great deal! When I first went over there, I worked with a band during the war. I did some

shows there with Glenn Miller—taped at a couple of canteens, you know, in those days—for soldiers and sailors. But outside of that, there were just a few—Bert Ambrose, Jack Hylton—and that was it. There wasn't anybody.

We tried to go into a studio and record, you know, and there wasn't anybody really good. But now, the musicians are first class and there are so many of them.

Feather: Do you have much difficulty finding suitable contemporary songs? You know, because the old concept of the 32-bar chorus is by the wayside.

Crosby: Pretty much. Yeah, there're some things like "The Way We Were," which is just as great a song as anything ever written. That'll be a standard. And there are so many others.

Feather: "Send in the Clowns" is a good one.

Crosby: Yes. But some of these written by fellows like James Taylor and Carole King—not even the Broadway tunes. You know, I think this thing Barry Manilow sings is a helluva song—"I Write the Songs."

I was thinking the other day: There're three fellows who, for me, sing pure songs. They sing the songs with no tricks, no gimmicks, no attempts at anything but good singing, listenable quality. The first is Buddy Clark. The second is Matt Monro. The third is this Barry Manilow.

I'm talking about a straight song. If you want to listen to a song and hear it sung beautifully, that's it. Those guys could do it. Matt Monro's got a song, "I Get Along Without You Very Well"—that record is one of the most beautiful records I've ever heard.

Feather: How about your female choices?

Crosby: Oh, I like all those .... Peggy (Lee), Barbra Streisand's got a glorious voice, Vikki Carr—great—great delivery, great power.

Feather: How about Sarah Vaughan?

Crosby: Oh, I love her. Sarah Vaughan. And Ella, and all those people. I always thought Diahann Carroll sang very well, but she doesn't sing very much. Helen Reddy sings pretty good, and she can put a little style in her singing.

Feather: You know Cleo Laine, the British girl?

Crosby: Oh, marvelous! Sensational! I haven't heard her in person—just on record. I went out and *bought* her record, and I hadn't bought a record in a long time. That's one record I *do* play once in a while. She's fantastic.

And I think Shirley Bassey's great. Dramatic, driving, but if you want a belter, she can belt it. In tune, too. I think she's a marvelous singer. And this Victoria .... I never can remember her name .... Victoria Newton-John?

Feather: Olivia Newton-John.

Crosby: Yeah, she's sweet. Sings nice little things.

Feather: One other thing; you remember I did an interview with Bob Crosby (Bing's brother) a while back, and he made some rather strange remarks ....

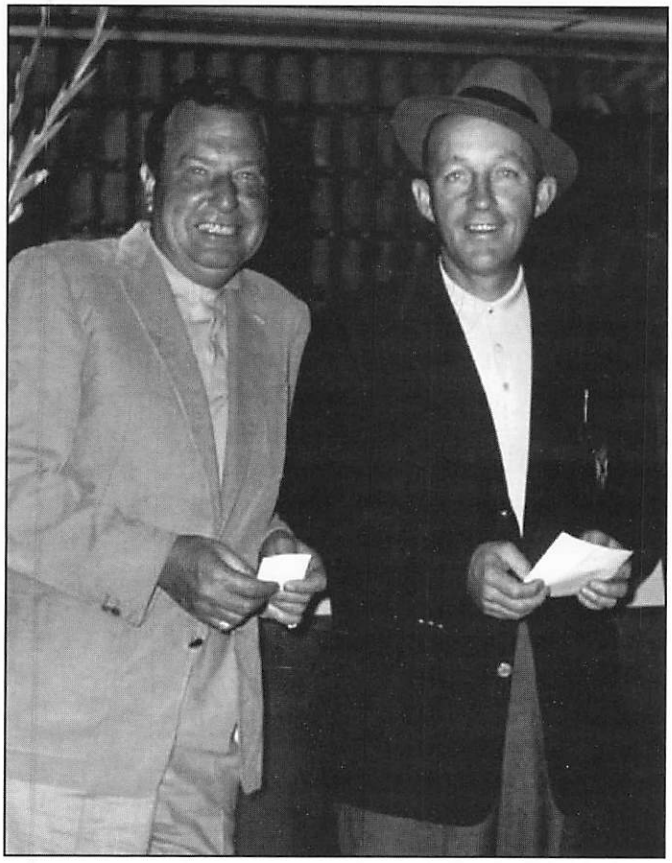
Crosby: He always does.

Feather: Like he said you have no friends, which obviously…

Crosby: I don't know. I don't understand that.

Feather: Who would you name as your best friend?

Crosby: Oh Phil Harris. I've got a lot of friends in the golf game. Lots of friends around the race track. Lots of friends in the business. All kinds of friends. I think I know more people from all walks of life than anybody.



With Phil Harris

Feather: I mean intimate, aside from Phil.

Crosby: Well, a lot of them are pretty intimate, 1 mean, I travel with them, I shoot, golf with them, I dine with them. Up in San Francisco I have a lot of friends that have nothing to do with show business, and I have some that are in show business. Some radio people, television people. My wife has a five-times-a-week TV show on a San Francisco station and I meet her friends all the time.

Feather: What's the relationship between you and Bob?

Crosby: Bob Hope?

Feather: Bob Crosby.

Crosby: He always thinks that I...I don't know what it is with him. We're very friendly; get along fine ... He's kind of spoiled. He was the youngest child and there was a long difference between him and the next oldest, and, I don't know. We always get along fine. But I think he's .... (pause) 1 can't understand it. Just like brothers are, you know.

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The obvious remoteness between Bob Crosby and his brother seemed symptomatic of Bing's character. He was always a very private person and throughout our conversation I found him affable, yet a trifle reserved. He was a man who enjoyed the acclaim, the material rewards that anyone in show business could have wanted.

He had reached the age at which he didn't want to be bothered by anyone whom he might feel needed a favor or might want to use him in some way. His home life was a happy one and he had no need of intimate associates outside of it.

Crosby's autobiography, published in 1953, was entitled "Call Me Lucky." It still applied in the evening of his years.

I came away from our meeting with the impression that all he wanted at that moment was for his luck to hold out as long as there might be an audience ready to accept him—and that turned out to be the case up to the very end. For Bing Crosby in his final years, that's what life was all about.

Leonard Feather

(*Los Angeles Times*, October 17, 1977)

A Dreamy Dreamland Beckons You and Me

Martin McQuade looks at an event which re-creates a golden age of music.

"When I first heard the "Rhythm Boys", it was not the top harmony that held me; it was that dignified yet unpretentious Baritone that my ears would crane to follow." – Orchestra leader Michael Arenella

A memorable fun filled excursion back to a golden age of popular music awaits anyone who attends the Jazz Age Lawn Parties which are presided over by Michael Arenella and his Dreamland Orchestra on historic Governors Island in New York Harbor. What began years ago as an intimate picnic concert has blossomed into a large – scale recurring facsimile of "The Gatsby Era." These magical day- trips begin with a plain old ferry ride, the only means of approaching the shady nooks where vintage – clad flappers and sheiks do "The Charleston" and cool themselves with papers fans, while swaying to the crazy rhythms of the maestro's baton.

Michael's meticulous arrangements from the dance band repertoire of the late 1920's and the early 1930's are authentically old fashioned, yet they possess the feeling of something completely new, even radical; simultaneously nostalgic and cutting edge.

The extravaganza is enhanced by the additions of a village marketplace, automobile displays, and floor shows reminiscent of "The Ziegfeld Follies." A wide variety of food and beverage is available, although you can pack a lunch basket and graze on the grass, while getting acquainted with fellow travelers from all points beyond.

Michael Arenella in action at Governors Island

What takes place here is a transport to the halcyon days of "Vo-Do-De-o-Do." Michael has long been fascinated by classic means of transportation, especially by train - a method once favored by a moonlighting violinist to help explain his revolutionary theory. By all together different means, Michael has proven that time indeed is relative, if only four days a year on Governors Island.

Accordingly, Michael's acquaintance with Bing Crosby's music followed a distinctive space - time continuum. Recently, after a *Dreamland* recital in Manhattan, he shared his impressions with me via e-mail, explaining this journey which would take him backward through Bing's late career to the meteoric days of the early "crooner."

"My fondness for Bing Crosby had started long before I ever realized it. I didn't grow up in a family that listened to Jazz, but at the start of the holiday season each year, the records of the warm friendly baritone voice crooning holiday tunes would be brought out. I remember being just transfixed by the man's voice; which harkened to a time and a feeling I really knew nothing about – but hoped to.

For me, it was such a refreshing departure for me from the then current, yet haggard, late '70s rock and roll that was the norm. It was as if it were "my" music. Not because it was Christmas music, mind you. This was perhaps before I even learned to play a horn, and it was definitely years before I learned to play or sing Jazz.

I don't think I actually realized it was Bing that my family spent each Christmas with until later in life when I became devoted, by my own winding path, to '20s and '30s Jazz. In retrospect, those recordings I heard in my childhood were actually Bing at the later end of his career. I became obsessed with 1920s Dance Bands in my early '20s, after moving to New York, and began at that time what would become my life's work of transcribing, performing -recreating - those bands' repertoires.

It was when I started to get into Paul Whiteman,

that a long faded memory of my childhood suddenly tipped its hat at me from the sepia tone strains; "that's the Christmas guy!" Even though it had been years since I'd heard those holiday tunes - I left home at an early age and moved to NY when I was a teenager to pursue my dream of being a professional jazz musician –I immediately recognized him. Then I looked at the liner notes: "Bing Crosby" It was like finding an old friend after years of separation- and as if he were saying, "Hello, old friend". And in a way, it was also a sign that I was heading down the right path.

As I developed as a singer and a musician, it was clear that Bing was much more than the "The Christmas Guy" (even though I find that to be a pretty weighty crown already). I really came to appreciate Bing in a whole new way. I had often fought my natural voice range; trying to be a tenor, as was generally the norm in the 1920s dance bands I was studying. But when I first heard the "Rhythm Boys", it was not the top harmony that held me; it was that dignified yet unpretentious Baritone that my ears would crane to follow.

And so Bing really helped me come into my own as a singer; he really legitimized the Jazz Baritone for me, and when I started to honor my natural voice range, I in turn found my real singing voice - a voice which Bing helped me find, long before I ever knew it."

Many Crosby classics are fixtures in Michael's repertoire: "From Monday On," "Mississippi Mud," "Just One More Chance," "Out of Nowhere," and of course 'Where the Blue of The Night Meets the Gold of the Day." These and other fastidiously resurrected charts waft through the air at the lawn parties, affording a rare opportunity to savor the artistic excitement in which the young Bing flourished! The essence of these *tableaux vivants* is captured in a lyric from one Crosby chestnut, "Goodnight Sweetheart." *A dreamy dreamland beckons you and me /how happy life could be if we could dream forever.*

Michael's cosmopolitan matinees are flashback adventures - unique, refreshing and transforming. Surrender this summer to a special island where "Pops" Whiteman, Bix and Bing are never far away. And where the strains of another Crosby recording may echo, as it did with me.

Oh I'm drifting back to dreamland - I'm sure I'll find you there

With a smile for every tear - and a kiss for every care

Oh I'm lonesome but I'm happy- For I know you wait for me

So I'm drifting back to dreamland - on a sea of memory

(From "I'm Drifting Back to Dreamland," lyrics by Florence Charlesworth and Charles Harrison; recorded by Bing Crosby in 1942)

Dates for this year's festivities are as follows:

Saturday, June, 15; Sunday, June 16

Saturday August 17; Sunday, August 18

For further information, please visit www.dreamlandorchestra.com

Book Notes

Margaret Talbot, the daughter of Lyle Talbot – an all purpose actor who starred in many Warner Brothers' films of the thirties - has written a memoir, *The Entertainer: Movies, Magic and My Father's Twentieth Century.* (Riverhead Books, 2012) Apparently Mr. Talbot made a killing during his long-ago leading man days. Ms. Talbot relates,

" Guys like Bing Crosby, Gene Autry and Bob Hope [dad would say] had seen not only that the movie industry in Southern California was going to last, but that buying up land and media outlets there was the way to go." She also recounts a most intriguing event.

"At the World's Fair in San Diego [1935] The Screen Actors' Guild put on a hearts – and – minds winning exhibit about Hollywood. Three or four actors would play a scene while a cameraman pretended to shoot it with an empty camera. Crowds would gather, transfixed by the clean smack of the clapboard, and the sense – this was long before the Universal Studios tours or anything like it – that they were getting a peek inside the machinery of motion picture making. Charlie Chaplin loaned his tramp's outfit and Mary Pickford her curls to put on display. **Bing Crosby sang**. Lyle and his SAG stalwart friends took turns heading down to San Diego on Sunday afternoons to volunteer at the exhibit."

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David Thomson is a highly respected film authority who has written *The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies* (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012). Mr. Thompson holds Bing in high regard. In a discussion on the merging of stardom and politics, he writes, "No one can now get office, or run for it, without possessing a viable or actorly television personality. He or she must be presented as a self we can admire. This is not just being 'photogenic,' it's being persuasively natural on moving film without seeming stupid. **It's Crosby and not Hope**; it's Dean Martin, not Jerry Lewis. John Kennedy had it. Nixon lacked it. Reagan had it." Although one may object to Mr. Thompson's distinctions, it is pleasing to see Bing's relaxed screen demeanor so well appreciated.

No Sale – Ho Hum!

The Jan. 13, 2013 broadcast of *American Pickers* on The History Channel shows the roving treasure hunters descend upon the Wisconsin home of a husband and wife team of antique hoarders. It is here that a blue brocaded Arabic nightshirt, claimed to be worn by Bing Crosby in *Road to Morocco*, is proudly displayed, albeit squished into a glass frame, authenticated by a label with the heading, "United Costumers" with Bing's name entered on the line below. The owners boast that they purchased this at an auction.

Pursuant to his attempt to wangle this item, one of

the hosts informs us that "Bing Crosby was an actor/singer from the golden age of Hollywood. This guy sung and danced his way through like seventy movies and countless albums." An on–screen insert further states, "Bing Crosby was the world's biggest selling recording artist at the time of his death in 1977. Crosby died of a heart attack after playing a round of golf. His last words were, 'That was a great game of golf, fellas.' " Meanwhile, footage appears of Bing strolling towards the camera with club in hand. The missus elaborates, "we got the movie and we played it and we found [Bing] wearing it in bed. It's his nightshirt." Finally a price tag is affixed: $1100.00. Notwithstanding the hosts' obvious enthusiasm, this gilded garment does not wind up in the foragers' truck.

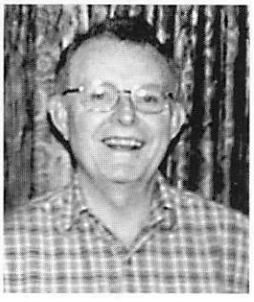
Martin McQuade

(Editor: In our last issue, we mentioned Martin's singing activities and we were pleased to have the following email from Martin:

"You may like to know that a Mr. and Mrs. Harris of Milwaukee, fellow members of the ICC, just happened to be in NY this past weekend visiting their daughter when they recalled your piece re my shows at The Greenhouse Cafe in Brooklyn and caught my Danny Kaye centennial tribute there on Sunday. They had a great time - and they particularly enjoyed my "White Christmas" segment. The shows are a lot of fun - as well as a lot of work. Fortunately a pianist with an encylopedic knowledge of songs - Pete Soklolow - accompanies me, making life a bit easier."

Since then, Martin has put on a centennial tribute to Jimmy Van Heusen at the Schnitzel Haus of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn singing songs such as "Darn that Dream" "I Thought About You"; "Road to Morocco"; "But Beautiful"; "Personality"; "Imagination"; "Second Time Around"; "Love and Marriage"; "Come Fly With Me"; "The Tender Trap" and "My Kind of Town".)

Celluloid Crosby



I don't intend buying the Festival Films DVD "Golf Mania" which Ken Crossland reviewed in the last issue of BING. This is not because I want to avoid the Crosby musical content - sparse though it is. I simply don't want to be reminded of my days on the golf course. I stopped "playing" golf at about the same time as I began submitting "Celluloid Crosby" articles to the "Crosby Collector" magazine. I'd given myself a fair chance to become competent at the game. I played regularly for about four years. I lived very near to a nine hole course and would walk up the hill for a game about twice a week during the summer months. Suffice to say that after about a couple of hundred rounds my last game was no better than my first. I called it quits and settled for occasionally beating my wife at a game of pitch and putt on a miniature course in Southport. Of course, she knew what my game of serious golf would be like because she had tolerated my attempts on the dance floor during our early years together. She reminded me that both activities required a modest degree of coordination. Viewing the "Golf Mania" DVD would only serve to revive unhappy memories.

Two of the items included on "Golf Mania" are accredited Crosby short films: *Faith, Hope and Hogan* and *Don't Hook Now.* I've written about *Faith, Hope and Hogan* in a previous issue of BING. Made in 1953 for the Christopher organisation its' mission was to promote religion rather than limit its appeal to viewers primarily interested in golf. Bob Hope explains the film's title in "This Is on Me", one of his several autobiographical books. He exaggerates the film's running time by calling it "an hour and a half of dialogue between golf shots" before explaining that Bing was labelled "Faith" on account of his role in *Going My Way*. The Hogan of the film's title was, of course, golfing ace Ben Hogan. Hogan is also seen in the earlier Crosby short film included on the "Golf Mania" DVD.

That other short, *Don't Hook Now*, has become of special interest over recent months. Just when I thought that all of Bing' s golfing related shorts had been made available, along comes *Los Astros se Divierten*. Screened at the annual Capitolfest at the Capitol Theatre, Rome, New York in the summer of 2012, this turned out to be a Spanish language version of *Don't Hook Now*. Capitolfest is a three day event which dedicates itself to showing rare shorts and features. Bing's vocal contribution to the Paramount featurette was said to be a Spanish language song which I assume is a lyrical translation of "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day". In the English language version that song tops and tails the short. Bing sings it over the film's opening credits and at its conclusion outside the Rancho Santa Fe club house.

"Tomorrow's My Lucky Day" is a song which is still awaiting some detection work to unravel its ancestry. The sheet music of the song shows a copyright date of 1949 yet *Don't Hook Now* had been filmed some seven years earlier. The programme for the Crosby sponsored pro-am golf tournament for 1977 says that the song was written in 1948 for *Honor Caddie*. That Technicolor one-reeler featured Bing, Bob Hope and a dozen or so golfers seeking support for scholarships for caddies and

in it Bing lip-synchs to the 1942 recording used in *Don't Hook Now*. Yet it would have seemed sensible to have copyrighted "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day" at the time it was first made available for public performance in 1942. It took fifteen years from Bing introducing the song in *Don't Hook Now* for him to make a studio recording of the Johnny Burke – Jimmy Van Heusen composition. Buddy Cole provided musical accompaniment on the recording. "Straight Down the Middle" was recorded at the same session and its coupling with "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day" provided me with my first golfing 78.

Bing sings "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day" in *Honor Caddie*

Returning to the making of *Don't Hook Now*, Malcolm Macfarlane's book "Bing Crosby - Day by Day" documents Bing golfing in his tournament at Rancho Santa Fe between 30th January and 1st February, 1942 so we can assume that producer/director Herbert Polesie filmed on one or all of those dates. It was edited to an eighteen minute short feature for theatrical exhibition and released in the USA in April 1943. In December 1943, it supported a double bill of RKO mild horror thrillers receiving their Los Angeles premieres. They were *The Seventh Victim* and *Ghost Ship*. The film reviewer of the *Los Angeles Examiner* thought the short worth a mention. He wrote of "Bob Hope and Bing Crosby relieving the tension [and being] seen and heard entertaining as only they can." The following month United Artists picked up the short for UK distribution.

It was only to be expected that Bing kicked off his golfing year at Rancho Santa Fe as he sponsored that pro-am event. His next major filming commitment was *Holiday Inn* which commenced shooting in March. This allowed him to spend most of February on the golf course. He took part in the Western Open held in Phoenix before embarking on a two week golfing tour through Texas accompanied by Bob Hope. This benefitted the War Relief Fund. Hope and Crosby devoted a similar fortnight in May to a PGA sponsored tour for the benefit of the war effort. Most of the golf played by the Bing and Bob partnership in 1942 was in support of some charitable cause. If you continue to scan "Bing Crosby - Day by Day" you will find that the latter half of the year saw the duo playing a couple of weeks in support of handicapped children and American Women's Voluntary Service.

And as this article has strayed from film to fairway I will cover another 1942 golfing event which raised funds for a good cause. Bing had swelled the bank balance of Bob Wills when he made a hit recording of "San Antonio Rose" at the end of 1940. Wills was known as "The King of Western Swing", a title no one ventured to challenge simply because no one came close to duplicating a genre Wills dominated. The Penguin Encyclopaedia of Popular Music defines western swing as country music influenced by jazz and often employing a large band. It is not hard to understand how this musical mix would appeal to Bing, whose tastes embraced many musical styles. The two musicians were united at Tulsa's Southern Hills Country Club in the late summer of 1942. Wills' manager at the time was O.W. Mayo. He recalled:

> *"Bing came in from the course where had had been playing golf. And Bob came down with his fiddle in his hand. He had been in California making pictures but he was between pictures. Mr. Way of KVOO was the guy that promoted the thing. They had a lot of people out there because Bing was quite an attraction. When they got ready to do the number, Bing couldn't remember the words. So I had to go off to one side and write the words down for Bing to sing it."*

Bing holds the paper containing the words as he sings "San Antonio Rose" with Bob Wills in Tulsa.

Apparently an acetate disc was made of the song during the event's live broadcast. An article in the *Tulsa World* dated 19th September, 1942, reported that Joseph Bowes, president of Oklahoma Natural Gas Company,

set the pace by buying a $50,000 bond and Bing gave the record to him. That's the recording we must track down once we get our hands on the Spanish version of "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day".

Keith Parkinson

The 20 Richest Musicians of All Time

On January 22, Eric Harvey had the following article on PopDust.com. We were surprised to see Bing included and we doubt that it is very accurate even allowing for an adjustment for inflation. This is how Mr. Harvey began his article and we will list the top 10 together with the words he wrote about Bing.

You can easily guess the wealthiest living musicians, but how do they stack up to the richest musicians *ever*? It helps to emerge at the right time (the late 1960s and early '70s or the mid- to late-'90s, the two moments when the now-shrunken industry was at its largest), make shrewd investments (in publishing and elsewhere, but also by capitalizing on one's own brand), and working across different media platforms (television, film, and touring). Adjusting fortunes going as far back the the pre-rock-and-roll era for inflation, we made some surprising discoveries.

1. Andrew Lloyd Webber: $1.2 billion
2. Paul McCartney: $800 million
3. Bono: $600 million
4. **Bing Crosby: $550 million**

The man who sang "I Haven't Time to Be A Millionaire" was incredibly wealthy. Crosby ranked among the 10 richest Americans in the 1930s—before he sang "White Christmas" and became one of the biggest movie stars of the '40s. His Bing Crosby Enterprises was the first pop artist entertainment empire, with properties ranging from television stations to Ampex magnetic tape technology to horse tracks.

5. Sean "Diddy" Combs: $550 million
6. Mariah Carey: $500 million
7. Jay-Z: $475 million
8. Dolly Parton: $450 million
9. Jimmy Buffett: $400 million
10. Michael Jackson: $350 million

"COULD WE HEAR IT AGAIN?": TEN YEARS WITH BING (1932-42)

Roger Schore ran across this lovely pre-Valentine's Day tribute to Bing on the *Jazz Lives* website.

Early in his career, Bing Crosby was a very erotic figure. And the film industry recognized his power. It wasn't his naked torso. It was his voice—warm, entreating, rich, sensitive, full of yearning.

Before he became more "fatherly" in his films; before he became grandfatherly on television (the man with a narrow tie and a hairpiece, singing Christmas songs alongside David Bowie and Michael Buble), he was a genuine all-purpose wooer.

A chick magnet, to put it plainly.

In many of his early films, the setup is simple: a lovely blonde, splendidly dressed (often in white) is reserved, cool, or even sullen. Bing aims that voice at her, in a yearning love ballad, and she melts in a series of reaction shots. Once the song is over, she has fallen for him. One can imagine tuxedo and gown being shed…

In some of the later films, Bing is moved from the more formal environment to more working-class environments: once a pianist / singer or a college professor teaching crooning, he is a sailor dangling from a rope, a man building a shelter for the castaways, a cowboy. Yes, he's in blackface for "Abraham" and pretends to play the clarinet for "The Birth of the Blues".

I don't think I have to make a case for Bing's easy rhythmic suppleness, that his "boo-boo-boo" runs parallel to scat singing, that he is one of the influences on a segregated America that made Caucasians receptive to African-American jazz, even when Louis was not in the picture. He swings, even at ballad tempo.

And for those theoretically-minded, Bing is deep in meta-consciousness of a post-modern sort, singing songs about his own singing. But enough of that.

These thoughts were provoked by an accidental YouTube discovery—thanks to *1926VictorCredenza*—his generous offering of a nearly two-hour videocassette of Bing's musical moments from his 1932-42 films. The Sennett shorts aren't here, nor is *Pennies from Heaven*, but I saw performances new to me. You'll also see Martha Raye, Carole Lombard, Louis Prima, Jack Teagarden, Harry Barris, Mary Martin, Eddie Lang. And those songs!

I offer this as a prelude to Valentine's Day. Learn to croon—if you want to win your heart's desire! (And she'll take off her shoes.)

Michael Steinman

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Kurt Schroeder, by email from Lovettsville, Virgina, USA

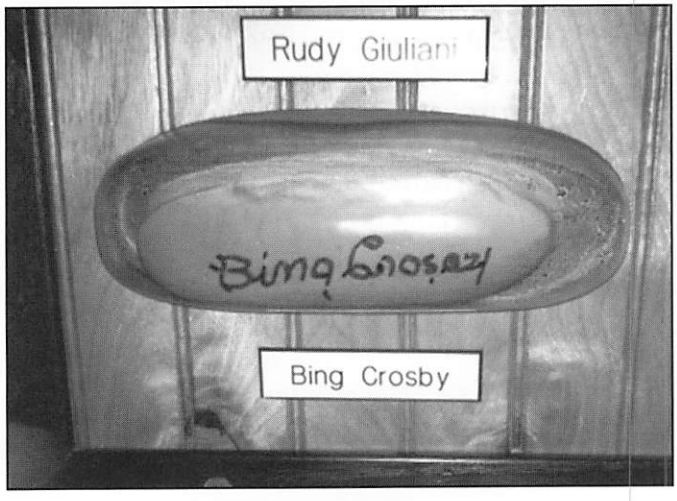
Bing was apparently willing to affix his autograph even to food!

On a recent visit to family members in Toledo, Ohio, we had dinner one night at Tony Packo's Café, a very popular local spot for tasty Hungarian food over the past eight decades (hwww.tonypacko.com/history.php). Viewers of the *M*A*S*H* TV show may remember that Corporal Klinger (Jamie Farr), who (like Farr) was from Toledo, prominently mentioned Packo's on the program a few times.

One of the decorative features of the restaurant is a huge collection of autographed hot dog buns mounted on the walls, which apparently started with one signed by Burt Reynolds 40 years ago. Of course, our man Bing is featured, as shown in the attached photo of his autographed bun, which is just inside the main entrance to the restaurant. I also spotted a bun signed by Bing's friend Rosemary Clooney, among the autographs from many dozens of other show business, political, and sports figures.

Bing truly is everywhere, if you take the time to look.

Keep up the great work with the magazine!



(Editor: Amazing! Where will he turn up next?

On a more serious subject, we were all shocked by the huge damage caused to the North Eastern coast of the USA by Hurricane Sandy last October. One of our members got comfort from Bing as you will now read.)

Carmela Amari, Staten Island, New York, USA

Bing helped us get through Sandy

The past six years I've lived in the middle of Staten Island. Our home is a four story condo made of brick and concrete. Thank God! Because that's what helped us survive Sandy. When Sandy hit it was very scary. The wind was so powerful. Trees fell, houses fell apart – especially the ones near the ocean. I know a few people who lost their homes and thankfully they knew to evacuate unlike some others who decided to stay and lost their lives. We lost power for a few days. Before the storm, I charged two portable DVD players so we could at least watch movies to get us through the hurricane.

The second night we decided to watch *White Christmas*. Now I know how the soldiers felt during WWII when Bing sang "White Christmas" to them. It was pitch black – all we heard was the wind, tree branches hitting the windows, things flying all around us – and Bing's singing was there to keep us calm. The weirdest thing was that as soon as the movie finished, our power came back on. Thank God and thanks Bing…I hope the other Bing fans who also live on the east coast are alright too!

…I was very sorry to read of the death of Jack Klugman. Jack was married to Peggy Crosby, the mother of Phil Crosby Jr. Some years ago when I had thyroid surgery and was going through a rough patch, Phil got Jack Klugman to sign a photo for me. I had always been a great fan of Jack and I grew up watching *The Odd Couple* on TV. So my thanks to Phil and Jack for cheering me up at the time. Jack will be sorely missed not only for his acting but for all he has done for people with throat cancer.

(Editor: The next letter went direct to Greg Van Beek for reasons you will soon understand.)

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia

I've just read BING number 162 from David Currington and, as usual, have spent a couple of hours enthralled as I read it. Usually I send an email to Malcolm but this time it's to you to, first, thank you for your contribution to the great magazine and to the Club and, secondly, to tell you how good it was to take my mind back to Hofstra University in 2002 via your article.

What a wonderful experience that was in November a decade ago. Helen and I attended some fascinating sessions, met some beaut people and learned about folk who had contributed to Bing's sucess. I'd not even heard of some of them before, folk such as Nick Perito and, I'm ashamed to admit, Joe Bushkin. (What a great character Joe turned out to be.) I've tried to borrow Nick Perito's book but it seems that no library in Australia has a copy.

At the Friday night banquet I couldn't believe my eyes when I realised that I was listening to the renowned Robert Merrill and then Margaret Whiting.

After reading your article, I couldn't help wonder if there'll be a similar event recognising the talents of more recent performers such as Michael Jackson, Madonna and Rick Astley (I'm kidding) twenty-five or thirty years after they've left us. I doubt it.

Patricia L. Donatelli, Toledo, Ohio, USA

I just received the absolutely beautiful BING magazine! What an exquisite piece of work. The entire magazine is one of class, from the writing to the printing quality.

Of course, I dearly love the article on my father! I love the way Bing's letter is on the inside back cover. The photos look great too. You are a very polished writer, and did an excellent job on the article. Absolutely love everything about it!

...From my father, Captain Charles Donatelli, and myself, a heartfelt thank you!!!!

Roger Schore, by email to Greg Van Beek from New York, USA

Received in the mail today the latest issue of BING and needless to say, I'm looking forward to reading it.

A company, Real Gone Music has recently been releasing Johnny Mathis CDs from his mid-sixties Mercury Records affiliation and on the latest and last one in the series "So Nice"/ "Johnny Mathis Sings," there's a recording of "The Second Time Around." James Ritz, the annotator for the series wrote, "One of the most beautifully written movie songs of the era, "The Second Time Around" from 1960's *High Time*, proved to be the last great standard introduced by Bing Crosby in one of his films. It was long overdue for the Mathis treatment and it was inevitable that he would get around to it if, for nothing else, personal reasons."

JOHNNY MATHIS: "My dad was the biggest Bing Crosby fan in the world and in fact he wanted me to sing like Bing. That was the reason he pushed his son - me! - to do what he did. I got to meet Bing because of golf. I met him on a couple of occasions. The last time I saw him was at a radio station in London where I was plugging something and he was doing interviews about a new album before passing through on his way to Spain to play golf. And that's where he passed away about a week later."

As always, thanks for the Herculean efforts you put in on Bing's behalf. It certainly is appreciated. Wishing you and your family a healthy and happy holiday season!

(Greg Van Beek: Interesting that he met Bing shortly before his passing. Makes Bing's comment during the recording of "Yesterday When I Was Young" ['if I don't get it right we'll fly Mathis in'] all the more ironic.)

Lorne Harasen, by email from Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

Received the winter edition of BING Magazine yesterday and as usual it has many interesting items. Please soldier on as Editor. Further to my comments about my regard for Her Majesty and her ever faithful Prince I was presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal here at Government House by our Lieutenant Governor and one of our Members of Parliament on November 14. I'm not sure that I am worthy but I won't be appealing the decision. For my part I am reminded of the French writer Montaigne who once observed: "I gather the flowers by the wayside, by the brooks and in the meadows, and only the string with which I bind them together is my own."

(Editor: Our congratulations to Lorne for this tremendous honour. He was nominated for his work as a broadcaster, communications officer and member of Saskatchewan War Memorials Committees. The Diamond Jubilee Medal was designed to commemorate Her Majesty's 60 remarkable years on the Throne as Queen of Canada. It is intended to recognize the service of Canadians to Canada, and is a tangible way for Canada to honour Her Majesty's selfless service and devotion to duty through six decades.)

Alan Matheson, by email from Vancouver, Canada.

Season's greetings and thank you for another excellent BING magazine. Thanks also for publishing my letter and I can assure you that I'll continue to bring Bing's music to the forefront in my jazz history classes.

Here's an interesting list of "10 Christmas Tunes That Aren't Completely Lame" from the Holiday Blog site. Most of what's on this list is unknown to me (and not what I'd likely choose to listen to) but have a look at who's in the #1 spot!

1. "Peace on Earth/Little Drummer Boy" by David Bowie and Bing Crosby (1977)

   Recorded and filmed for a television special called "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas," the strenuously unlikely pairing of Bing Crosby with David Bowie — then still in the heady throes of his innovative Berlin period with envelope-pushing albums like Low and Heroes — has gone down in history as an inspired and surreal bit of TV programming. After a de rigueur exchange of yuletide pleasantries, Bowie and Crosby launch into the stirring and slightly schmaltzy duet, with Bing providing sonorous "rum-ba-bum-bums" beneath Bowie's mannered crooning. Three and a half decades later, the odd duo's harmonies maintain the power to both raise eyebrows and warm cockles.

2. "White Christmas" by Iggy Pop (2009)
3. "Il Est Ne, Le Divin Enfant" by Siouxsie & the Banshees (1982)
4. "Merry Christmas (I Don't Want to Fight Tonight)" by the Ramones (1989)
5. "Christmas in Hollis" by Run-DMC (1987)
6. "2000 Miles" by The Pretenders (1983)

7. "Christmas with the Devil" by Spinal Tap (1984)
8. "It's A Wonderful Life (Gonna Have a Good Time)" by Fishbone (1987)
9. "Frosty the Snowman" by Cocteau Twins (1993)
10. "Christmas Griping" by R.E.M. (1991)

I may have mentioned this before in a website posting but I wish someone (Ken Barnes?) would re-mix the Bing/Bowie "Drummer Boy". Bowie's voice dominates the mix to such a degree that it's hard (for me, anyway) to hear Bing's contribution much of the time.

(Editor: An interesting list and I regret that, like Alan, I had never heard of some of the songs and their singers.

There were several polls of Christmas songs around in December and Ron Field spotted one in the Globe and Mail, the Toronto newspaper, which published their seven best Christmas songs. Bing was #1 with "White Christmas" and #7 with "Little Drummer Boy" with Bowie.

Also, there are often interesting comments seen on the Crosby Fan World site and I particularly liked the following.)

Steve Fay, Fulton County, Illinois, USA (as seen on Crosby Fan World)

Not having cable or satellite TV, I have gotten more and more used to movies becoming a rarity on American broadcast TV, and consequently I expect to see fewer older movies on the stations I get. With the holiday season, a few Christmas-related movies have been showing so far, but they are either ones from the last 10-15 years or they are cartoon features. It's not like the old days when two or three stations would repeat each of the major Christmas movies from the 1940s and 50s. To watch those, we have resort to our tapes and DVDs. So this past Saturday night became *White Christmas* night at our house.

There are probably not many films I have watched as many times as *White Christmas*, so obviously all of the scenes and songs are intensely familiar, yet I still get choked up at the end when the stage backdrop rises to show the snow falling, and in those moments when Rosie's and Bing's characters fall back in love. The drama of the old general and his former troops' devotion to him still affects me, too. Then there are the seasonal songs, and not just the title song, but also "Snow" which still deserves more radio play than I ever think it got.

But there are also occasionally new or surprisingly-deepening impressions that come along in these later viewings. One particularly strong one is how great Danny Kaye's singing and dancing are in the song: "The Best Things Happen While You're Dancing." The effortlessly-looking high spins around those posts are quite amazing. Another thing that stood out for me Saturday was just how good Rosemary Clooney was, not just her great singing, but how convincing she was with all of the attitudes and emotional states her character travels through. And then how she is entirely lovely in the scene that included the "Count Your Blessings." What a shame that she and Bing didn't do another movie together.

A Couple of Song and Dance Men in *White Christmas*

Another impression came through to me more than in the past, too, and that was about Bing's own dancing ability. While he certainly could have been upstaged by co-stars like Astaire, O'Connor, or Kaye, Bing always seemed to hold his own in dance scenes with their lot. He might not look like he could be as light on his feet as they were, but he matched them step for step, unless he didn't for comic effect. While it rarely seems to get mentioned, Bing Crosby is quite a competent hoofer! I wonder what kind of effort went into keeping him on his toes so well.

(Editor: There is evidence that a huge effort was put in by Bing when he had to dance. Fred Astaire commented on this in his autobiography.

"Having heard that he didn't like to rehearse much, I was amazed when he showed up in practice clothes to rehearse our first song and dance "I'll Capture Her Heart."

Meanwhile Norman Wolfe is musing about the slight furore in the last issue about the Sepia CDs.)

Norman Wolfe, by email from Cumming, Georgia, USA

An intriguing little storm-in-a-teacup is brewing, among the membership of the International Club Crosby, over the "Bing Crosby Through The Years" series of compact disks from Sepia Records.

The matter being debated extends beyond Crosby to all major artists whose work transcends their times and

their fields. Should that work be preserved in its entirety or should history get only the best? Are we to have all of Dickens or only *David Copperfield*?

A secondary factor then becomes if only vintage work is to be preserved, who decides what is vintage and what is not? In the case of Crosby music, I feel strongly that I should make that decision. You doubtless believe you should.

No matter which side you alight on, isn't the furor refreshing? Isn't it exciting to see the membership worked up, even militant, over an aspect of Crosby music?

Igniter of the debate is one Professor James Fisher who has had the temerity to suggest preservation (and promulgation) of mediocre work detracts from, rather than augments, the stature of an artist, in this instance Crosby. It is difficult to take issue with that.

Should you wish to impress the uninitiated with Crosby's skill would you reach for "It's Easy To Remember," from 1935, when he was 32, or "Hey, Jude," from 1968, when he was 65?

Age is unkind to artists. The painter's vision blurs; the sculptor's hand trembles; the vocalist's range diminishes. If you endure long enough, you are likely to produce some less than satisfying work. The only way to perform at your peak forever is to leave the stage prematurely. Nobody, for example, will ever hear Russ Columbo sing badly.

Leading the preservationists, or "completists," if you will, is F.B. (Wig) Wiggins, a lifelong Crosby collector, whose credentials are impeccable. Wig comes to the defense of the Sepia series, and the remarkable Jonzo series which preceded it, as essential in preventing an important part of the Crosby musical legacy from being swallowed up in the digital age.

He concedes the decline of quality in the post-war years, manifest in the Sepia series, but maintains inasmuch as Crosby was the most influential vocalist of the 20th century everything he recorded, be it great or mediocre, must be preserved.

But must it, the professor seems to counter? How vital is it history be provided with indisputable evidence Bing Crosby didn't always sing well?

It is stimulating to see other Crosby authorities, such as Keith Parkinson, weigh in on the subject, and to note our esteemed editor slyly pitting brother against brother in the interest of good reading for his magazine.

We never will resolve the question but that doesn't matter. What does is that more than a century after his birth and 35 years after his death, we are furiously discussing his music. That's marvelous. By all means, let's holler at each other.

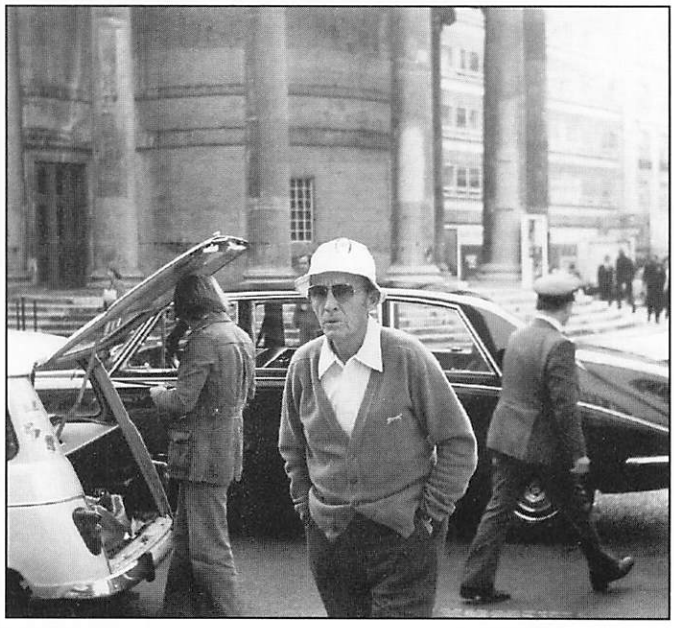
On another matter, knowing my happiness is of paramount interest to you, I want you to know I am in hog heaven. My son visited last week and bought me an iPod. He then programmed seven hours of Crosby music for me. I have no idea how it all works but I am astute enough to place the ear plugs into my ears and turn on the device. I am hearing stuff I hadn't played for years such as "Dear Old Girl", "Sing Me a Song of the Islands", "Marcheta", "Who Calls?". Having all this on a device not much bigger than a postage stamp is truly miraculous, especially for someone who grew up on 78 rpms.

John Whitehead, Hornchurch, Essex, UK

Following our conversation a few weeks ago, I am sending you the enclosed picture. The background is that on September 15, 1977 I had heard that Bing was to appear on Pete Murray's Open House on Radio 2. I arranged my working day so as I could be in London and maybe catch him going into Broadcasting House. I arrived just as the car drew up. Kathryn preceded Bing and said to me that he has some back trouble and is taking his time. As the picture shows I think he was a little apprehensive of me. There was only one other person waiting there, and because of this he found time to sign a couple of autographs. I thanked him for all the pleasure his work had given me and my family over the years, and he continued on his way without speaking.

I later saw him leave by a side door which was the entrance to the Concert Hall. I gathered he found this more comfortable for his problem which meant he could make use of an elevator. He was in quite a good mood and spoke to a few people who had gathered, but did not stop too long.

I hope this is of some use to you.



Bing Crosby and His Disciples

In our last issue, Greg Van Beek discussed the Hofstra conference. One man who presented a paper at Hofstra was radio presenter Otto Bruno. Back on May 3rd, 2010, he wrote the following on his blog.

Today marks the anniversary of the birth of Bing Crosby. Much has been written about Crosby since his death over thirty years ago, some of it good, some of it bad. In my opinion, the only reliable, well-written and meticulously researched biography came from author Gary Giddins in 2001. The book, entitled Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years 1903-1940 was volume one of a two volume history.

Let me say I'm a big Crosby fan. In fact, I'm a rarity in that I'm a big fan of both Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. I attended conferences at Hofstra University in 1998 (Sinatra) and 2002 (Crosby) that examined the cultural impact of these entertainment icons on American society. In the Sinatra camp, Frank is king and no one else comes close to his talent. In the Crosby camp, Bing is king and no one else comes close to his talent. For me personally, I think Frank is probably the greatest male ballad singer of all time but I think Bing is the greatest rhythm singer. Frank conveys a personal intimacy and pain in his saloon songs as he liked to call them that Bing can't duplicate. Crosby, however, infuses certain songs with a whimsy and humor that Frank can't come close to pulling off. They were both tremendous talents and their impact on our culture was huge.

Bing and Frank autograph their LP "America I Hear You Singing"

Both men also had their demons as well. Quite honestly, I laugh at people who seem to think that whatever negative personality traits these men had should somehow influence our appreciation of their music. The complexity of the artistic personality and ego has long been known. Should we not appreciate the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald because he was a drunk? Should we not appreciate the work of Van Gogh because he went a little nuts and cut off his ear? The Beatles used recreational drugs so let's ban their music! To think this is obviously ridiculous. Certainly we'd like to respect the personal lives of our idols as much as we respect their art but that is not always possible. Nevertheless, it should in no way diminish our enjoyment and appreciation of their phenomenal talents.

In the history of American entertainment there were few talents as great as Bing Crosby and his Italian American disciples: Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dean Martin. What follows is the paper I presented at the 2002 Hofstra conference about Crosby and his influence on the great Italian American singers.

****

When Bing Crosby's star began to rise in the late 1920's he represented something entirely new in popular music. His relaxed, natural style of singing, or crooning, as it came to be known, seemed to be directed towards the individual listener. He combined his own wit and sense of humor with rhythms and sounds of the jazz age to create an exciting new vocal style that captivated the youth of America. Many of the young people embracing this music were the children of the immigrants who had been pouring into America since the late 1800's. The music represented the energy, excitement and possibilities of America and filled them with dreams and ambitions that could only be realized in this land of opportunity. Bing Crosby became the embodiment of that hope, that opportunity, that America of which they so desperately wanted to be a part.

Crosby's chief rival as king of the crooners in those early years was a young Italian American singer by the name of Russ Columbo. For a time, some thought that Columbo would give a serious challenge to Crosby's dominance behind the microphone but fate ended that debate when Columbo was killed in a freak gun accident in 1934. Ironically, three of the most successful disciples of Crosby's style and music would also come from the Italian American community. Three young men who grew up in America's jazz age and, while they recalled listening to Columbo in their youth, all agreed that it was Crosby whom they thought of as the figurative father of their careers. While it might be argued that it was Crosby's superiority as a vocalist that garnered their attention, no doubt the difference of his background from their own ethnic roots held an appeal for these aspiring American success stories that could not be matched by their fellow Italo-American, Russ Columbo.

Pierino Como, Francis Albert Sinatra and Dino Crocetti were all born within roughly five years of one another: Como in May of 1912, Sinatra in December of 1915 and Crocetti (who would eventually become Dean Martin) in June of 1917. All three were the children of

Italian/Sicilian immigrants. Como and Crocetti grew up not far from one another in the blue collar towns of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania and Steubenville, Ohio. Sinatra grew up in Hoboken, New Jersey in the shadow of the great metropolis of New York City. Como was the seventh child from a large Italian family of ten children. Dino came from a family of about half that size while Sinatra was an only child who often sought companionship and approval from his extended family and friends. Como and Crocetti seemed to have drifted into singing more or less by accident whereas Sinatra at some point made the conscious decision to become a singer. Similar backgrounds but a variety of experiences – the linchpin that seems to have connected them and sent them down the same road toward musical stardom was Harry Lillis Crosby.

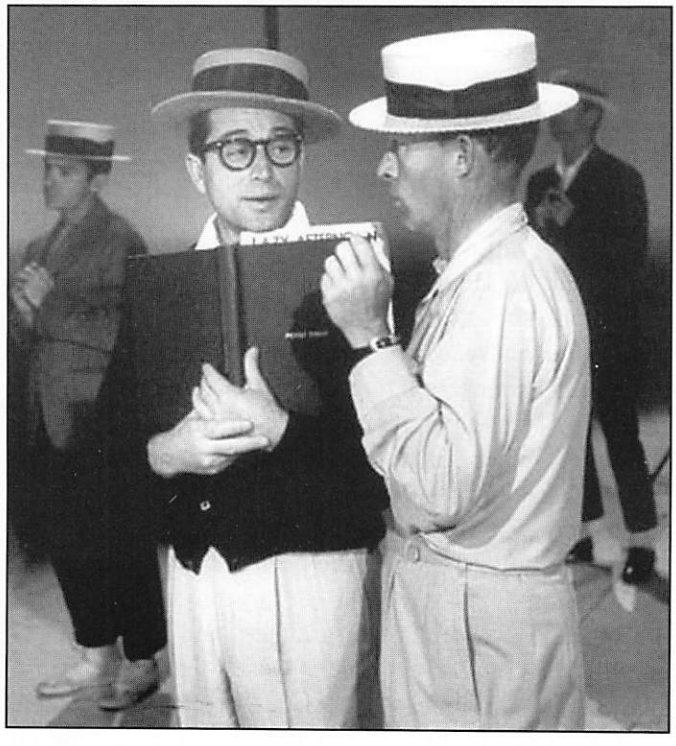
Perry Como began cutting hair at the age of twelve and by 14 years old was running his own barbershop. He would sing in the shop to entertain his customers. His easy and relaxed style was reminiscent of the young band singer featured with Paul Whiteman's popular orchestra. By the early 1930s, as Crosby's celebrity was beginning to spread, Como began venturing onto stages and dance floors to sing the hits of the day. At the urging of some friends he tried out for a territory band fronted by a gentleman named Freddie Carlone. Carlone offered him a job as a singer but Como was reluctant to accept because it paid less than half of what he was making each week in the barbershop. Nevertheless, in 1933, after some prodding from his father, who Perry remembered fondly as being a music lover and strong supporter of his career, Como signed on with the Carlone Band and began his professional career as a singer.

When Como began his tenure with the Carlone Band in 1933 megaphones were still a popular way for singers to amplify their voices. Soon, however, microphones would become the popular and commonplace tool of crooners everywhere. The microphone, which was so important to Bing Crosby's phenomenal success, was an instrument that Como was initially hesitant to use. Fortunately, Carlone persuaded him to adjust himself to the emerging technology. Eventually, like Crosby and all the very best singers to come along in those golden years of American music, it was Como's mastery of the microphone, and ability to manipulate it as an instrumentalist would their instrument, that would figure prominently in his incredible success.

Como was so fond of, and loyal to, Freddie Carlone that when an offer came from Ted Weems in 1935, Carlone had to practically push Perry out the door to accept the chance with the more prominent outfit. Como would spend seven enjoyable, but somewhat less than groundbreaking, years with Weems. The Weems Band had too many specialty singers and novelty numbers so that Como was not well featured. Another setback with the Weems Orchestra was their recording contract with Decca Records, the same company for whom Crosby recorded. On one of Como's first sessions with the band, Dave Kapp, brother of Decca President Jack Kapp, said to Ted Weems "Why are you letting him sing? Hell, we got one Crosby."

When the Weems Band folded up in early 1943, Como, tired of the road, was ready to return to Canonsburg and open another barbershop. Luckily for Como and his millions of future fans, he never got the chance. Instead he received an offer from Tommy Rockwell of the Rockwell-O'Keefe Agency to manage his solo career. He found Como some engagements in New York and a sustaining radio program that allowed him to stay close to home with his wife and young child. Within a matter of months Como was receiving rave notices around New York. Rockwell also landed him a contract with RCA Records when they were looking for a crooner to compete with Sinatra on the Columbia label and Crosby on Decca. The year was 1943 and his affiliation with RCA would span five decades. By the late 1940's Como would become one of the very first entertainers to master the medium of television. Como's easy and relaxed style made audiences feel comfortable inviting him into their homes on a weekly basis.

Perry Como welcomed Bing Crosby as a guest on his television show in 1960. He also appeared with Bing on his television special that same year. He often credited Crosby's influence on his phrasing and style. Como, a pretty humble superstar himself, could never get over Crosby's discomfort in receiving compliments. "One time we did a duet on television," Como recalled, "and I said, 'If it hadn't been for him, folks, I'd still be cutting hair.' He was embarrassed, almost insulted. Afterward, he said, 'Gee, Perry, don't say that.'"



Bing and Perry prepare for a TV show.

One particular aspect of the Crosby persona that seems to have been echoed in Como's career is the connection with America's Christmas season. It is more than likely that no other singers in history have recorded as much Christmas music as Crosby and Como; Bing recorded almost 100 Christmas songs and Perry recorded about half as much or roughly 50 recordings.

A variety of historical and cultural factors go in to creating our cultural traditions. In the case of Crosby's appeal as America's favorite Christmas crooner, you have a hit movie, a world war and the 1930's/1940's phenomenon of radio that worked to forever connect his image with America's holiday season. In 1942, Bing Crosby co-starred with Fred Astaire in the hit film *Holiday Inn*, which boasted an unbelievable score filled with Irving Berlin songs that went on to become American standards. Among the many wonderful songs from this movie, the best remembered and most enduring is the yuletide classic, "White Christmas." Crosby not only introduced the song on film, but sang it on his popular Kraft Music Hall radio program as well. Through film, radio and special appearances for servicemen, Crosby was able to promote and cement his connection to this holiday anthem. The song, expressing the longing for Christmas' "just like the ones we used to know" had an especially powerful emotional impact on families and servicemen who were spending their first Christmas apart from one another due to the awful conflict holding the world hostage in 1942. This song, along with Crosby's recording of the traditional carol "Silent Night," would not only become Bing Crosby's two best selling records but two of the biggest selling records in all of recording history.

Despite the passing of more than half a century, every Christmas you are certain to hear Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" and "Silent Night" with reassuring regularity over thousands of radio stations all over the world. Right alongside Bing's familiar classics you will also hear Perry Como's renditions of "Toyland," "Home for the Holidays," and "Ave Maria," to name just a few. He is, as I like to say on my annual Christmas radio show, Italian America's holiday equivalent of Bing Crosby. For Perry Como it was television, the new technology that would forever change the landscape of American culture, which helped to forge *his* connection to the Christmas season with his audience. I cannot remember a Christmas during my childhood where my mother didn't stop wrapping presents, baking cookies or cleaning the house to sit down and watch the annual Perry Como Christmas Special. It may very well have been the most anticipated television show of the year for my mom. I'm sure it meant no less to millions of mothers and grandmothers all over the country, especially those of Italian descent. While the young bobby-soxers of the 1940's may have swooned over Frankie at the Paramount, a generation later they had become wives and mothers. They now felt a deep admiration, respect and affection for the faithful husband, humble father and good neighbor that Perry Como had come to so strongly represent by the 1950's and 1960's.

Bing Crosby's yearly Christmas shows on radio were a tradition which millions of Americans looked forward to every holiday season. Crosby's holiday songfest was as much a part of America's holiday season as cutting down the Christmas tree or roasting chestnuts on an open fire. What Bing's calming and relaxed demeanor meant to Americans during the frightening and turbulent years of World War II, Perry Como's calming and relaxed demeanor meant to American's during the decades of continual social change from Fifties postwar America to the Seventies Watergate scandal and beyond. No other television performer of the day better understood or exploited the intimacy of television in connecting with their audience. Como knew who his fans were and what they expected of him. Occasionally, a nightclub performer would get offended because he/she was asked to tone down their act for the Como show. Perry explained, "People would call me Father Como, but we weren't playing Holier Than Thou, we just knew our audience. We didn't try to offend, we just tried to entertain."

The Father Como image was fodder that many of the comedians of the day used to good-naturedly tease Perry Como. Audiences, however, did indeed identify Como with his Catholicism. By welcoming guests like Bishop Fulton J. Sheen to his variety show in 1956 and visiting Pope Paul VI on a trip to Rome in the 1960's, Como did little to discourage the connection. On one hand a cynical observer might say that Como was trying to ingratiate himself with viewers by promoting a wholesome, religious image. However, when you consider the furor raised over candidate John F. Kennedy's Catholicism in the 1960 election, you would better understand why producers, sponsors and entertainment executives didn't relish their big stars sharing that kind of polarizing personal information with the general public. No, by all accounts, Como was indeed a devout Catholic and trusted his audience enough to allow them that knowledge without fear of offending those who were of a different philosophy or faith.

Como's confidence in sharing his faith with his audience may have had some precedent in the career of the man he looked up to more than any other performer. After all, Crosby had won an Academy Award for his portrayal of the loveable, yet slightly rebellious, Catholic priest Father O'Malley in *Going My Way*. It was so popular that Paramount had him reprise the role two years later in *The Bells of St. Mary's*. Audiences for years had connected Crosby to his Catholicism. His fans respected what they saw as Crosby's strong religious beliefs and family values. It was that virtuous image, so very different from that of the brash and swinging "hep

cat" he personified in his Whiteman years, which contributed to his success with sentimental pieces like "White Christmas" and religious carols such as "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fideles." And it was this image as a religious and dedicated family man that Perry Como came to embody during the Eisenhower years and beyond. An image as far removed as one could be from that of his contemporaries, and Crosby's other main disciples, Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

It was while Como was beginning his singing career in the early 1930's in Canonsburg that, just a few miles over the Pennsylvania border into Ohio, another young Italian American was learning a whole different set of skills in the gambling joints of Steubenville, Ohio. Dino Crocetti was learning to deal blackjack and apprenticing as a croupier. However, Dino's friends also knew he had a pleasant and soothing voice and encouraged him to sing in those clubs as well. In circumstances similar to Perry Como's, and in the same city of Cleveland, Ohio, where Como had joined forces with Freddie Carlone, Dino Crocetti auditioned and was hired by bandleader Sammy Watkins in 1940. Watkins changed the young singer's name to Dean Martin and a new chapter of entertainment history was ready to be written. In fact, in a 1987 interview Dean Martin recalled that "I went with another band to Cleveland. [We] played on the second floor above a Chinese restaurant. Perry [Como] was with another band in an alley across the way."

Years later, basking in the glow of his success in movies, television and recordings, Dean Martin also gave credit to Bing Crosby publicly, and with great frequency, for the influence on his own career. In a 1967 interview with Oriana Fallaci, Dean confessed, "When a Bing Crosby movie came to Steubenville, I would stay there all day and watch – that's how I learned to sing because it's true I don't read a note." Dean mentioned Sinatra and Como in the same interview as he continued, "I learned from Crosby and so did Sinatra and Perry Como. We all started imitatin' him [Crosby]; he was the teacher for all of us."

According to Dean Martin's longtime TV producer, Greg Garrison, Dean once acknowledged Harry Mills of The Mills brothers as a major influence on his singing as well.

Bing Crosby and His Disciples – Part II (as published on May 4, 2010)

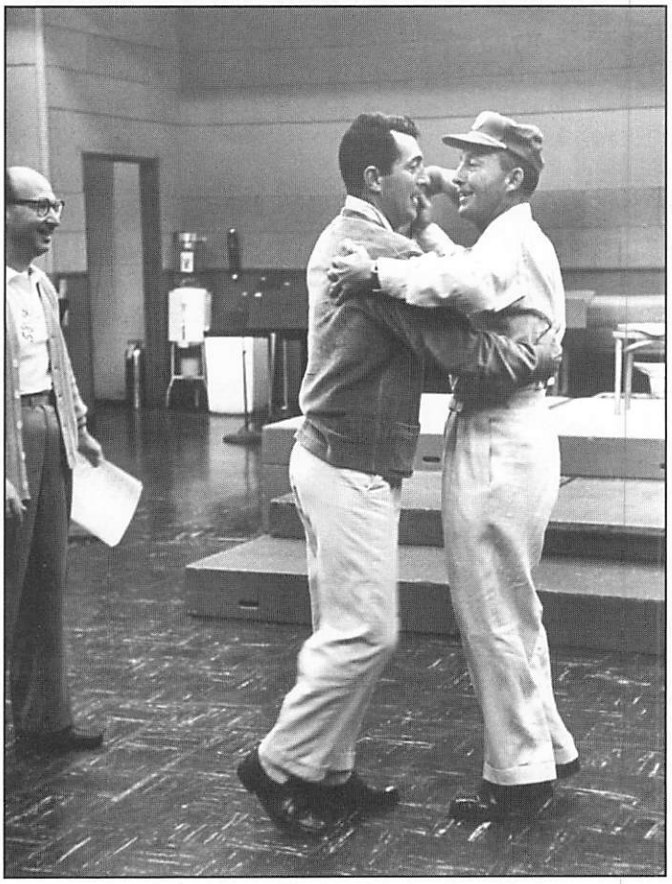
Yesterday, I began to write about Bing Crosby and his influence on the Italian American singers, specifically Perry Como, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. As I mentioned, I attended an academic conference at Hofstra University on Long Island in New York entitled BING! Crosby and American Culture in 2002. While there was a great deal of talk on the Crosby-Sinatra relationship at that conference, I must admit I was rather surprised that I was the only person to draw the connection between all four singers. Nick Perito, Musical Director for Perry Como from 1964-1992, did talk a little about Como's admiration for Bing. I, however, was the only person to talk at any length about Dean Martin's debt to Der Bingle. In fact, Will Friedwald, author of "SINATRA The Song Is You: A Singer's Art," was there to talk about Crosby's influence on Tony Bennett but neglected to share a quote from Bennett's autobiography, which Friedwald helped write, that refers specifically to that influence! Bennett's uncle, who was in show business, sat him down one day and told him, "There is one singer who has changed the face of this business, and you must watch everything he does. His name is Bing Crosby, and he's the boss." Bennett goes on to say that "from that day on I studied Bing. I learned a lot watching him grow as a performer. He's the one who showed all of us how to do it." It was a sentiment shared publicly, and often, by Como, Martin and Sinatra. Later in the same conference Mr. Friedwald, upon hearing the subject matter of my paper, referred to Crosby as "the first Italian crooner."

I ended yesterday's post with Dino's quote that all three of them (Como, Sinatra and Martin) had "all started [out] imitatin' him [Crosby]." In 1950, Dean even went as far as recording a happy little ditty called "If I Could Sing Like Bing" as a kind of public proclamation describing his debt to Crosby. If you examine Martin's career, I believe you'll find that he shared more than just a certain singing style with his mentor Mr. Crosby.

If there was another aspect of Crosby's persona that Dean seemed to possess more than his counterparts Sinatra and Como, it was his flair for comedy. Sinatra showed flashes of brilliance in his early romantic comedies *Anchors Aweigh*, *Take Me Out To The Ballgame* and *On The Town*, with MGM co-star Gene Kelly, as well as some wonderful comic turns in the 1950s with films such as *The Tender Trap* and *Guys and Dolls*. Nevertheless, he never truly possessed the relaxed ease for which Dino was an acknowledged master. And while Como had a homespun brand of innocent and mischievous humor as displayed on his variety show of the 1950's and 1960's, his was an unpolished gift that was never adequately tested and honed on film.

Early in Bing Crosby's career he starred in a series of film shorts for Mack Sennett. The famous silent film producer had sensed an innate sense of comedic timing and style in Crosby's stage presence and used it to great advantage on film. As the years went by, Crosby polished his early slapstick comedy skills into a natural and relaxed comic timing that shone brightly in the classic sarcasm of the Hope/Crosby Road pictures. It's possible Dean Martin was just born with wonderful comic timing or, perhaps, he learned more than he realized from those early Crosby films he studied so religiously. Countless actors and actresses who worked with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis commented that Dean, in addition to his impeccable timing as a straight

man, possessed a genuine wit and humor in casual conversation that was unmatched by his scene stealing partner. In 1961, Dean spoke of his early days on stage with Jerry and the joy he got from performing comedy. "I love to hear laughter, but I couldn't get laughter just singing," Martin told *Look* Magazine's Pete Martin. "Hearing a whole audience laugh is like getting drunk." No pun intended, I'm sure. Another aspect of both Martin and Crosby's humor was self-deprecation or the art of not taking oneself too seriously. It was a quality that helped endear them both to millions of fans.



Bing and Dino have fun as they rehearse while Sammy Cahn looks on.

Despite their many similar qualities, Dean Martin did not possess the image of the God-fearing churchgoer or patriotic American Everyman that Crosby held. Instead Dino was part of Frank Sinatra's hard-drinking, fun-loving group of over-age adolescents that owned, figuratively and literally, Las Vegas. Ironically, Martin and Perry Como were both hugely successful on TV for the same reason, an easy and relaxed style, as well as for completely different reasons. Perry was America's loveable, moral, upright neighbor or uncle while Dean played the role of the loveable rascal with a touch of larceny in his soul.

While Bing distinguished himself as a crooner who could, and did, sing every type of song imaginable, and Como followed suit in that regard, Dean did not possess such range. He started out as a Crosby imitator and while working with Lewis became known as the quintessential Italian singer with songs like "Oh Marie," "That's Amore" and "Innamorata." In fact, of all the most prominent Italian American singers, Dean Martin recorded more songs with Italian origins and/or themes than Sinatra, Como and Tony Bennett combined. Dino Crocetti spoke nothing but Italian until he was five years old. However, once he went to school and ventured into the pool halls and gambling joints of Steubenville, Ohio, he forgot his family's native tongue. He admitted that it wasn't until he got to Hollywood and started to spend time with Sinatra, Vic Damone and others that they used Italian as a way to speak in front of others when they didn't want anyone to know what they were saying. Like most children of the immigrants, Dino admitted another truth about his Italian language skills when he told Oriana Fallaci, "But mine isn't really Italian. It's a dialect from Abruzzi," Dean admitted, "and I speak it badly." You couldn't tell that to the executives at Capitol Records as they tallied up the receipts for records such as "Volare," "Return To Me" and "An Evening in Roma."

In Crosby's expansive repertoire of songs, he took particular joy in the swinging Southern novelties that had brought such tremendous notoriety to his early idol, Al Jolson. In early recordings, Dean Martin sounds very much like the Jolson-influenced Crosby. In fact, Dean Martin's first 12 inch long-playing album was "Swingin' Down Yonder" which included two old Jolson hits "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" and "Carolina in the Morning." The same album also featured "Mississippi Mud" written by Rhythm Boy alum Harry Barris and "Dinah," a song important to both Crosby and Jolson's careers. This album might be seen as the genesis for what would grow into Dean Martin's predilection for Country and Western music. Despite the seemingly incompatible pairing of Dino the Italian crooner with the sounds of the South, Dean's relaxed style and vagabond persona served him well as a successful and believable Country Western artist in the latter years of his career. Once again his idol Crosby had set the precedent before him with successful recordings of Country Western flavored tunes like "Along the Navajo Trail," "Shenandoah" and "Vaya Con Dios." And once again the connection with Como is established as well as Perry Como spent the last decade of his RCA career working in the recording studios of Nashville, Tennessee – the home of Country music. In fact, even Sinatra recorded some Country songs late in his recording career such as "For the Good Times" which was included in his classic 1979 Trilogy album.

In many ways, the Italian American singer most closely associated with the legend of Crosby is the man who was painted by some as Crosby's rival and by others as his successor – Frank Sinatra. The treasury of wonderful recordings of Crosby and Sinatra from the radio programs of the 1940s and 1950s promote a sarcastic but warm-hearted feud between the two

crooners. It is important to recognize that of the three major Italian American singers being discussed, Sinatra is the one who sounds the least like Bing. That apparently was by design. Sinatra said that he set out to find a sound different from Bing. Whatever the case, we know from Sinatra's interviews over the years that what he did receive from Bing was the idea and the inspiration to make a career of professional singing.

Sinatra's first wife Nancy recalled the night Sinatra decided to become a singer in the 1995 book, "Frank Sinatra: An American Legend," written by daughter Nancy Sinatra. Apparently, Sinatra took his sweetheart to hear Bing Crosby perform live. Mrs. Sinatra told her daughter, "Bing had always been his [Sinatra's] hero, and he had listened to all his records, but watching him perform in person made it all come alive for him." She went on to say, "I don't think he believed it would ever really happen for him, until that night. 'Someday,' he told me on the way home, 'that's gonna be me up there.'" Talk about your understatements.

The facts point to a mutual admiration and respect between Crosby and Sinatra that goes back to their earliest meetings. This mutual respect was ultimately displayed when, in 1963, Bing Crosby signed on with Sinatra's new recording company Reprise Records. In signing with the fledgling label Crosby told the British publication *Melody Maker*, "Let's face it – Sinatra is a king. He is a very sharp operator, a keen record chief and has a keen appreciation of what the public wants." In fact, if Sinatra inherited little from Crosby as a song stylist, perhaps what he did take from Crosby was the vision to picture himself as Frank Sinatra Incorporated. Of all the early Hollywood stars, Bing Crosby became one of the most financially successful by diversifying his business interests and making prudent investment choices in real estate, oil and, of course, orange juice. Frank Sinatra would do the same as his idol by diversifying his investments in the recording industry, airlines and hotels and become all the richer for it.

In the early 1940's there was a running competition between the older, established singing star of Bing Crosby and the young upstart and heir to the throne, Sinatra. Radio gag writers had a field day supplying zingers, nicknames and plot lines to fuel this phony feud. In a *Command Performance* radio program from early in 1943 Dinah Shore and Bing Crosby shared the following exchange:

Dinah Shore: Bing, Frank's a great singer…the kind that comes along once in a lifetime.

Bing Crosby: Yeah and he has to come along in *my* lifetime.

Dinah Shore: You must admit he has great presence at the microphone.

Bing Crosby: True, true, if you can tell where the mike leaves off and Sinatra begins. (Radio abounded with jokes about how skinny Sinatra was at the time!)

In "Why Sinatra Matters." author Pete Hamill quotes Sinatra from the early 1970s, "You can't imagine now how big Crosby was," Sinatra said at the time. "He was the biggest thing in the country. On records. On radio. In the movies. Everybody wanted to be Bing Crosby, including me."

Frank meets Bing for the first time.

If you truly want to know how much Sinatra admired and idolized Bing Crosby just take another look at the duet of "Well, Did You Evah?" that they perform together in the film musical *High Society*. It's all there for the world to see in Sinatra's eyes, energy and physical movements in that five minute film sequence. In that sequence you see a man thrilled, and maybe even a little intimidated, to be co-starring with the idol of his youth, the icon that inspired his dreams. The only other scenes in Sinatra's entire 40 year film career where he conveys a similar feeling of unadulterated joy is in his duets with Gene Kelly in movies like *Anchors Aweigh* and *Take Me out to the Ballgame*.

Pete Hamill, who knew and understood Sinatra better than most journalists, once again quotes from Frank's reminiscences about Crosby's impact on his career and on the culture of Depression era America. "The thing about Bing was, he made you think you could do it too," Sinatra said, half a century later. "He was so relaxed, so casual. He was so good, you never saw the rehearsal, the effort, the *hard work.* Every time Bing sang, it was a duet, and you were the other singer."

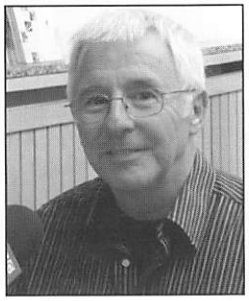
America always held Bing Crosby and his contribution to American culture and entertainment in high regard. This appreciation was well deserved and appropriate. Now Italian America should also make a special acknowledgement to Crosby as well. For not only did he contribute to American culture through his own music and films but in the inspiration he gave to three Italian American singers who went on to contribute

much to American entertainment and to the legacy of their Italian American ancestry.

Otto Bruno

(**Otto Bruno** has been the host of The Sunday Music Festa on the Rochester, NY based radio station Jazz90.1 since January, 2000. He graduated from Ithaca College with a degree in Cinema Studies and worked for about five years in the commercial and industrial film business. He's currently a freelance writer and, as such, a regular contributor to "Fra Noi," an Italian American publication published in Chicago, IL. A native and life-long resident of Western New York, he was born at the end of the Baby Boom and his interests range from the popular culture of his parents and siblings generations (1920s- 1950s) to that of his own childhood in the 1960s and 1970s. His show features the music of The Great American Songbook as performed by some of his favorite performers and you can hear Otto every Sunday afternoon on the Sunday Music Festa from 12 noon – 2 p.m.)

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

A better selection of Bing's films have been shown this time, namely:-

Going My Way	TCM
Holiday Inn	Encore Family
Road to Bali	TCM
Road to Morocco	TCM
Robin and the Seven Hoods	TCM
Welcome Stranger	TCM
White Christmas (7 showings!)	AMC

Michael Bublé: Home for the Holidays on NBC was mentioned earlier in this issue so we will not duplicate the comments here.

Greg Van Beek has something to report too:

"Friend and fellow ICC member Scott Hughes of Oakland, California alerted me to the fact that on November 2nd, the popular TV game show *Jeopardy!*, hosted by Alex Trebek, featured a category headed simply "Crosby". The format of the game is an answer-and-question format in which contestants are presented with clues in the form of answers, and must phrase their responses in question form. Answers ranged from clues about Bing's life, movies, and music, and it was surprising the number of missed questions posed to the answers for topics that, to us, would be very easy to name. Nonetheless, it was a nice, albeit unexpected treat."

USA Radio

Regis Philbin returned as the special guest host of "Bing Crosby Christmas Radio," which was broadcast on SiriusXM from December 19-26. The channel celebrated Bing's life and legacy by airing his Christmas broadcasts from 1942-1962 brimming with celebrity guests and musical performances, plus the rare recording of him reciting the iconic poem "The Night Before Christmas." We heard Christmas shows from the Kraft Music Hall, Philco, Chesterfield and GE plus an Armed Forces Radio program "Personal Album" from December 1944 and the Screen Guild broadcasts of *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way*. Several "Christmas Sings with Bing" were heard too. In addition, Regis had his own segment where he presented his favorite Crosby Christmas tracks and he gave a wonderful plug for BING magazine and the ICC during the week of broadcasts.

This year for the first time, "Bing Crosby Christmas Radio" featured special presentations by **Arne Fogel** of "Bing's Basement," a collection of Christmas-related outtakes, rarities, and obscurities from the personal Crosby vault that included the story of how Crosby became the "Voice of Christmas" after he recorded Christmas carols for the St. Columban Foreign Missionary Society.

NOT LICENSED FOR RADIO BROADCAST
Made and Distributed for Benefit of St. Columban Missionary Society.
Sacred Vocal with Instrumental Accompaniment
SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
BING CROSBY
With Orchestra and Choir
1A
MANUFACTURED BY DECCA RECORDS, INC.

Written and produced by Arne Fogel and Robert Bader, these were first-class programs which were excellently hosted by Arne. The tracks heard were:

Bing's Basement #1

It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas (Chesterfield) – Adeste Fideles (1935) – Lift Up Your Hearts – Stabat Mater – Silent Night (1935) – Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town (alternate) – Message to

Shriner's (1954 – includes "Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town") – Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (V-disc) – Christmas Greetings to Decca people (1940) – Let's Start the New Year Right – I'll Be Home for Christmas – White Christmas (KMH Dec. 25, 1941) – White Christmas (1942 – alternate) – Silver Bells (with Toni Arden) – Silver Bells (with Ella Fitzgerald) – Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (with Ella) – White Christmas (Feb. 5, 1945) - Message to Nancy Eiland (includes "The Christmas Song").

Bing's Basement #2

The Night Before Christmas – Sleigh Ride (1952 and 1977 versions) – White World of Winter – The Secret of Christmas (1959) – How Lovely Is Christmas – Just What I Wanted for Christmas – Do You Hear What I Hear – White Christmas (1947) – Salvation Army message – White Christmas (GE 1952) – Here Comes Santa Claus (with Peggy Lee) – Little Jack Frost Get Lost (with Peggy Lee) – Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (with Judy Garland) – A Marshmallow World (with Ella Fitzgerald) – Jingle Bells (1957) – A Time to Be Jolly – Chat from radio show Dec. 7, 1954 re Christmas – Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy (with David Bowie) – White Christmas (1976)

That last item was very rare indeed as it was the 48-second recording of "White Christmas" which it was originally hoped to include in the Palladium set. How did the recording come about? **Ken Barnes** gave the background in a recent email.

"...In 1976, I was working on two Bing albums at the same time for United Artists - 1. The London Palladium set and 2. "Beautiful Memories".

I was mixing and editing the Palladium album when the people at U.A. wondered why Bing had not included "White Christmas" in his mammoth "Crosby Medley." Bing's answer was "In June? Wrong time of the year."

It was in August that I had organised sessions for "Beautiful Memories" that Bing - due to business meetings - could not get to the studio. He instructed me to go ahead and record the orchestral tracks with the promise that he would add the vocals in Los Angeles "...sometime in October." So, in October, I flew to L.A. with the backing tracks and booked some sessions at the old Devonshire Sound Studios on Magnolia Blvd in North Hollywood. It was then that someone at U.A. suggested that Bing sing a half chorus of "White Christmas" to be edited into "the Crosby Medley." Bing agreed and I booked that wonderful pianist, Paul Smith - who listened to the Palladium medley and then did an excellent imitation of Joe Bushkin's piano style. We rolled the tape and Bing sang that half chorus in one take. It was the easiest 50 dollars that Paul Smith ever made. Just 5 minutes work.

...When I returned to London to complete editing the Palladium album, I discovered that the audio quality on "White Christmas" was noticeably different from the sound on "The Crosby Medley." We tried hard to make it match - but to no avail. So the track was never used."

And talking of Ken Barnes and SiriusXM, Ken was on the Siriusly Sinatra channel 71 in January with a program called "Playing Favorites with Ken Barnes". Ken, who is President of the Sinatra Music Society in the UK, played some of his favorite Sinatra recordings and also shared some special memories of Johnny Mercer, Fred Astaire and, of course, Bing. This was a very interesting show indeed with Ken talking about Bing in great detail and saying that the high spot of his career was producing the session he did with Bing and Fred.

Ken and Bing run through a song together.

The tracks played were:
The Very Thought of You - Frank Sinatra
The Days of Wine and Roses - Johnny Mercer
Talk to Me Baby - Johnny Mercer
The Pleasure of Your Company - Bing Crosby and Johnny Mercer The Only Way to Go - Bing Crosby
They Can't Take That Away from Me - Fred Astaire
Top Billing - Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire
Session Outtakes - Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire
We'll Meet Again - Frank Sinatra
London by Night - Frank Sinatra
How Lucky Can You Get - Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire

The Crosby radio shows – which have kindly been made available by Bing Crosby Enterprises – have continued to be heard at weekly intervals on the SiriusXM 40s on 4 channel. The shows air on Saturdays at 6 pm (ET) with rebroadcasts on Sundays at 11 am (ET) and Mondays at 12 midnight (ET). Sirius edits them by taking out the original commercials and inserting their own announcements. Two shows are broadcast, one after the other, with a few extra songs being added to fill out the hour. The contents of the weekly broadcasts since our last issue was prepared were:

1. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 1st November 1953
Guest: Gary Crosby
Philco Radio Time 23rd October March 1946
Guest: Spike Jones
(To complete the one hour time shot, Sirius added four songs from *GI Journal* of 16th June, 1944 and "The Bombardier Song" from a Kraft broadcast.)

2. Philco Radio Time 5th November 1947
Guests: Ozzie & Harriet Nelson
Kraft Music Hall 9th November 1944
Guest: Ethel Smith
(Three songs from KMH of 5th April 1945 were used to complete the hour)
3. Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield, 21st November 1951
Guests: Alexis Smith and Bert Wheeler
Philco Radio Time 19th November 1947
Guests: Dorothy Kirsten and Barry Fitzgerald
(plus two songs from the Philco show of 11th December 1946)
4. Kraft Music Hall 23rd November 1944
Guest: Risë Stevens
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 15th November 1953
Guest: Peggy Lee
(two songs from the Philco show of 12th January 1949 were used to complete the hour)

I missed the broadcasts on December 1, 8 and 15, but then we heard:

5. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 20th December 1953
No guest
Kraft Music Hall 21st December 1944
Guest: Eugenie Baird
6. Kraft Music Hall 30th December 1943
Guest: Cass Daley
Kraft Music Hall 6th January 1944
Guests: William Frawley and Nan Wynn
(two songs from the Philco show of 11th December 1946 were used to complete the hour)
7. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 15th January 1953
Guests: Rosemary Clooney and Bob Hope
Kraft Music Hall 11th January 1945
Guests: Spike Jones & his City Slickers
(to complete the hour, Sirius included four songs from the KMH of 11th May 1944)
8. Bing Crosby Show for Chesterfield, 3rd January 1951
Guest: Fred Astaire
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 22nd January 1953
Guest: Rosemary Clooney and Joe Venuti
(Sirius added 5 songs from the KMH of 18th January 1945 to complete the hour)
9. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 29th January 1953
Guest: Kay Starr
Kraft Music Hall 13th January 1944
Guests: Jane Frazee and George Murphy
(The hour was completed with two songs and an extract from the Flop Parade medley, all heard in Philco Radio Time of 15th October, 1947)
10. Philco Radio Time 5th January 1949
Guests: Harry James and Betty Grable
GI Journal 16th June, 1944
Guest: Lena Horne
(to complete the hour slot, two songs from the Philco show 11th December 1946 were included)
11. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 19th February 1953
Guest: Joanne Gilbert
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 31st January 1954
Guest: Connie Russell
(Three songs from the GE show of 9th April 1953 completed the hour)
12. Philco Radio Time 5th February 1947
Guests: Beatrice Lillie and Peggy Lee
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 14th February 1954
Guest: Ella Fitzgerald
(Three songs from the Chesterfield Show of 18th October 1950 added to fill the slot).
13. Philco Radio Time 29th January 1947
Guests: Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour
Philco Radio Time 14th April 1948
Guests: Fibber McGee & Molly
(Two songs from the Philco Show of 12th January 1949 were used to complete the hour)
14. Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 26th February 1953
Guest: Peggy Lee
Kraft Music Hall 8th February 1945
Guests: Fred Lowery and Vivienne Delaquiesa
(plus two songs from Philco of 11th December 1946)
15. Philco Radio Time 26th February 1947
Guests: The Andrews Sisters and Les Paul
Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, 28th March 1954
Guest: Frank Sinatra
(three songs from the KMH of 5th April 1945 completed the lineup)

Our thanks to **Judy Schmid** for facilitating the information about these SiriusXM broadcasts.

Greg Van Beek is continuing to carve out a niche for himself as a broadcaster with his weekly radio series called *Nostalgia Radio Time* on 1420 AM WJUB. Greg's show is on for an hour each Saturday starting at 10 pm (CST) / 11 pm (ET) and always includes a "Bing Sings" segment. Tune in online at the www.1420thebreeze.com website or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to www.1420thebreeze.com and clicking on the 'audio archives' link. One of the highlights heard over the months was the broadcast on November 17 of Greg's interview with John H. Mills of the Mills Brothers which he has described earlier in this issue.

Greg also presented his annual "A Bing Crosby Christmas" program on December 22 and played:

A Time to Be Jolly - Sleigh Ride (1977) - Do You Hear What I Hear? – I'll Be Home for Christmas - Excerpt from December 1950 Bob Hope radio show (Bing sings "Silver Bells" w/ Carol Richards) - Excerpt from December 1938 Kraft Music Hall radio show (Bing sings "Adeste Fideles") - Christmas Is A-Comin' - The Christmas Song - I Wish You a Merry Christmas (12/24/62 with Rosemary Clooney & Johnny Mercer) - Winter Wonderland with Johnny Mercer & Rosemary Clooney - Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas with Chrissy DePauw - Excerpt from Pete Murray's Open House, BBC Radio 9/15/77 (Bing on David Bowie) - Little Drummer Boy scene / song with David Bowie - When a Child Is Born - Christmas Star - A Marshmallow World - Excerpt from December 1949 Bob Hope radio show (Bing sings

"Silent Night") - Excerpt from December 1972 Michael Parkinson show, BBC-TV (Bing sings "White Christmas").

Arne Fogel's Saturday night radio program "The Bing Shift" is broadcast at 7 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN. and it can be picked up internationally, via the KBEM-JAZZ 88 website (http://jazz88.mpls.k12.mn.us/) . As an example, Arne's February 9th show was titled "Bing Sings: Through the Decades" and we heard:
After You've Gone (1929) - Straight from the Shoulder (1934) – Amor (1944) - Au Bord De L'eau (1953) - The Straight Life (1968) - Where the Morning Glories Grow (1975) PLUS: Ya Gotta Give the People Hoke - I Can't Get Started (1956) - Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (1939) - The Day You Came Along (1933) - Changes (1927) - The Big Movie Show in the Sky (1949) - Who Threw the Overalls in Mrs. Murphy's Chowder? (1945) - Would You? (1936) - Yes Indeed (1940).

Rich Conaty's long-running "The Big Broadcast" show from New York on WFUV puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet. It was good to see Rich on screen in *Michael Feinstein's American Songbook* series recently.

KEZW and the Glenn Miller Archive at the University of Colorado present the *Star Spangled Radio Hour* every Saturday night at 6pm. Hosts Rick Crandall and Dennis Spragg introduce live big band radio broadcasts from the 30s and 40s each week that likely haven't been heard since they originally aired. On Thanksgiving weekend, they broadcast the Thursday, November 23, 1944 (Thanksgiving evening) *Kraft Music Hall* show with Bing, Eugenie Baird, the Charioteers, John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra, Charles Henderson and the Kraft Choir with guest Risë Stevens of the Metropolitan Opera. The show was also available at www.kezw.com as a podcast for two weeks following the broadcast.

TV highlights - UK

Not too much to report on the TV scene in the UK and the only films shown were:

The Country Girl (several showings)	Sky Classics
The Greatest Show on Earth	Film4
White Christmas (several showings)	Sky Classics

However on Sky Arts2 we have had the superb ***Michael Feinstein's American Songbook*** series in nine parts which American viewers saw on PBS some time ago. In this Michael tells the story of the first 50 years of American popular music with many clips of the stars of yesterday including, of course, Bing. Mr. Crosby was seen singing "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" in a film short for the Forces in part 2 and his involvement in financing the development of magnetic tape was highlighted. He popped up again in part 6 singing "Buy a Bond".

This really was a top class series and Michael's passion for the Great American Songbook came across very strongly. It was fascinating to see him visiting various collectors of sheet music, radio broadcasts and records. Some of these men had extremely well organized archives but not all of them! Michael called on talk show host Joe Franklin and his rarities looked as though a bomb had hit them as they were spread over huge untidy heaps which had toppled over. Joe looked to have some marvellous things though. Part 4 of the series took us into the Playboy Mansion to see Hugh Hefner's wonderful collection. One of the items he displayed was a very rare film of Al Bowlly singing "The Very Thought of You".

In Part 5, we saw Michael exercising in his gym and there on the wall was a large poster for Bing's 1977 appearance at the London Palladium. I had to smile at seeing Michael's cat using the treadmill.

Michael Feinstein

Bing came back into view in part 8 as it was about radio and it highlighted how Bing's use of tape radically changed the scene. Bing was featured singing "Don't Fence Me In" from the *Swingtime with the Stars* short. When Ken Crossland and I were researching the Perry Como book some years ago, we discovered a listing of a radio show featuring Perry and Rosemary Clooney in which they previewed the songs from *Call Me Madam* in 1950. In part 8, Michael Feinstein visited a collector who was able to play this very rare show for him and we heard Perry and Rosie singing "You're Just in Love" and then we segued into Michael singing the same song with Rosie in 1991. A nice segment.

Part 9 concluded the series and I was sorry to see a sub-title stating that *Feinstein's at Loews Regency* closed on December 31, 2012 after 14 years. This is to enable the Regency Hotel to undergo a renovation, but the good news is that *Feinstein's* will open at a new venue later this year.

Sky Arts2 showed **"Great Entertainers – The Show Stoppers"** on December 13 and this had Bing

singing "Pennies from Heaven" from a 1964 TV special. Other artists featured were Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, Rosemary Clooney and many more. Not great quality unfortunately, but watchable.

Also it was good to see ***The Legendary Bing Crosby*** programme popping up again on Sky Arts2 during November and December.

Member Cyril Stansfield wrote to tell me of yet another programme seen on Sky Arts2 on Christmas Eve and this was the Pasadena Roof Orchestra's 40th anniversary concert from London's Cadogan Hall. The concert included a tribute to Bing with the orchestra playing "Where the Blue of the Night" with a vocal and whistled chorus by Duncan Galloway. Later Duncan combined with Simon Townley and Enrico Tomasso to sing "So The Bluebirds and the Blackbirds Got Together" as The Rhythm Boys.

To honour the 70th anniversary of Bing's "White Christmas", ITV1 mounted a 90-minute peak viewing special on December 22 which examined **"The Nation's Favourite Christmas Song"**. A preamble about Bing led into segments in reverse number order of the top 20 songs resulting from a nationwide poll. (No one asked me to vote though!) At No. 16 was the Bing 'n' Bowie duet with a very glamorous Mary Crosby describing the background to the recording and then writers Buz Kohan and Larry Grossman explaining how they had to write the "Peace on Earth" part in short order as Bowie did not like "Little Drummer Boy". "White Christmas" came in fourth and again Mary was on hand to discuss the importance of the song and how Bing's version will always be the best of the other 500 efforts at the song. The top song? "Fairytale of New York" by The Pogues. No comment!

The Richest Songs in the World (BBC Four on December 28) was an excellent look at some of the highest earning songs of all time. An estimate had been made of how much each song had earned for the writers and the publishing company in royalties from downloads, records, sheet music, film soundtracks, greeting cards, phone jingles etc. Mark Radcliffe presented a countdown of the top ten songs and lifted the lid on how music royalties work. "White Christmas" made an appearance of course having earned royalties of £24M and we saw Bing singing the song in a *Hollywood Palace* show from 1966 as well as hearing the 1947 version. Jody Rosen, author of the book "White Christmas", gave background details about the song.

The chart came out as follows.

1. Happy Birthday
2. White Christmas
3. You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'
4. Yesterday
5. Unchained Melody
6. Stand By Me
7. Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town
8. Every Breath You Take
6. Oh, Pretty Woman
10. The Christmas Song

Isabel Mohan, writing in the *Telegraph*, commented on the winning song (earnings of £30M) as follows:

> "Originally written in 1893 by two sisters in Kentucky, it "went viral" via word of mouth and was snapped up by Warner Chappell in 1990, meaning that it's technically illegal to wail it to your loved ones without paying royalties. See you all in court."

Finally, **Colin Stewart** spotted an unusual bit of Crosbyana and he wrote to tell us about it.

> "Recently BBC1 ran a week of *Winterwatch* programmes and the first day saw reports on how our garden birds survive the winter with the opening shots on the robin. So they chose the background music of "When the red, red robin keeps bob, bob bobbing along" sung by our man with the first eight bars clear before fading but still playing behind the commentary and then coming back loud and clear to finish. Good they chose Bing rather than Al Jolson not that Joly didn't do a good job!"

UK radio

Paul Gambaccini - History of Music Radio

In BING#161, we gave details of a forthcoming six-part history of music radio on BBC Radio2 called "Music in the Air" which was due to be broadcast starting on September 26. The date was changed subsequently to November 13 and the title of the series was altered to "History of Music Radio". Bing was included in the first two parts.

Part One was subtitled "Broadcasting Has Come to Stay" and in it Paul Gambaccini told the story of the early radio pioneers in the USA and the UK from 1906 to 1945. About half-way through the hour-long broadcast, there was a focus on the network sponsored shows broadcast in the States during this era, when the most successful radio star was Bing and his *Kraft Music Hall*. There was a useful Bing segment starting with extracts from one of Bing's early Cocoanut Grove broadcasts and from a Cremo show with Bing singing "As Time Goes By" in 1931. Bing was heard discussing the Kraft show and we also heard from Anthony Quinn on this subject too. The programme later moved on to the war years and we were treated to Bing singing "I'll Be Seeing You" on an Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme in 1944.

Part Two was called "The Moondog Kingdom" (the title was taken from the Alan Freed radio show) and it began with Bing singing "Where the Blue of the Night" as the introduction to a longish Crosby piece about *Philco Radio Time* being the first network programme to be recorded on tape. Bing was heard on that first show broadcast on October 1st, 1947 singing "My Heart Is a Hobo". The programme then went on to trace developments from the end of the Second World War to the early '60s and was a nostalgic joy for older UK listeners as we heard segments about "Family Favourites", "Housewives Choice", the Third Programme, Jack Jackson and even Sandy MacPherson. The importance of Radio Luxembourg was stressed and Bing then popped up again as "Galway Bay" was the first No. 1 on the Radio Luxembourg sheet music charts.

The series was very thoroughly researched and it was good to have Bing's importance duly recognised.

The National Presenters

Russell Davies on his BBC Radio2 show on Sunday evenings focuses on the art, craft and inspiration of the popular song. Bing was heard frequently during the period with songs varying from "Wa-Da-Da" to "Home on the Range" (1933). Russell described the latter as "a masterpiece – a strikingly heartfelt version". In his Jimmy Van Heusen centenary tribute, Russell included Bing's version of "Sunday, Monday or Always".

On other nationally networked programmes, **Desmond Carrington's** Friday night show usually has a particular theme each time and Bing has been heard occasionally with songs such as "Pessimistic Character with the Crab Apple Face", "Fancy Meeting You Here",- "Snow" and "Dance with a Dolly".

Elaine Paige on Sunday (Radio 2, Sundays 1 p.m.) includes a Crosby song now again and we heard the Bing and Buble version of "White Christmas", "Now You Has Jazz" and "Little One" during the period.

The final hour on BBC Radio2 on Sunday nights is still being taken by **David Jacobs**. After my gentle complaint in the last issue about David not playing much Bing, I was embarrassed to find that he had a major tribute to Bing on his November 4 broadcast whilst the magazine was still at the printers. David said some very nice things about our man too, introducing him as "one of the greatest artists of our kind of music, one of the founding fathers of 20th century popular singing, the star of stars." He played four tracks by Mr. Crosby – "April Showers" and "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along" with Al Jolson – then "How About You" (with Rosie) and "Bye Bye Blues" (with Satchmo). Many thanks, David. However, he wasn't finished there and he went on to play a number of Bing songs over the next three months, including "The One I Love", "A Time to Be Jolly" and "The Oldest Established (Permanent Floating Crap Game in New York)".

The local radio presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) frequently featured Bing on her Sunday afternoon show (4-6 p.m.) and in the two month period to January 6, she played an incredible mix of Bing's songs. Unfortunately, after a 24 years run, Anne's Sunday afternoon show was then re-scheduled and is now heard from 10p.m. to midnight on Saturday nights. In all, on her Saturday and Sunday shows over the four months, Anne included 41 Bing songs ranging from "A Quiet Girl" to "Enjoy Yourself" (with Bob Crosby) to "The Magic Window". It really was a wonderful selection. She continues to welcome requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk.* There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast.

Bill Rennells on his *Harmony Nights* show gets plenty of requests for Bing, especially from Crosby stalwarts Trevor and Pat Wagstaff, Stan White and Ian Lawrence. On one broadcast, Stan White was described as "encyclopaedic" for answering a query about an Alan Breeze recording! Among the rarer items heard were "The Old Lamplighter", "Prisoner of Love", "Once in a Blue Moon", "Younger Than Springtime" and the rejected version of "You Took Advantage of Me". *Harmony Nights* is heard on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet for three hours starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings. This show also has a "Listen Again" option. Email Bill with your Bing requests at *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk.*

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** often plays Mr. Crosby on his programme of big band swing and balladeers each Sunday from 3pm to 6pm. The songs heard varied from "Galway Bay", "Mexicali Rose" to "Let's Harmonise" and "She is the Sunshine of Virginia". There's a "Listen again" facility too. Email requests to *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.*

"The Late Paul Barnes", the big band and jazz oriented show hosted by **Paul Barnes** continues to be heard for two hours over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. The "Listen again" facility is in place for this show as well. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk for this. Paul features the ICC calendar each month and he gave the sad news that the 2013 edition will be our last. Paul has often not been happy with our "Songs of the Month" so this year Stan White got him to submit suggestions and we have used quite a lot of these. Apart from the monthly feature built around our calendar, Paul has used Bing in tributes to Eddie Lang ("Some of These Days"), Spike Jones ("White Christmas", Spike was the drummer on the 1942 recording), Jimmy Van Heusen centenary ("Got the Moon in My Pocket") and Patty Andrews ("Be-bop Spoken Here"). In playing "It Had to Be You" from the March calendar, Paul gave a very nice birthday greeting to Stan White, a tremendous friend of the programme. Paul's show is not a request programme but he is always glad to have comments and you can email these to *paul.barnes@bbc.co.uk.*

Jim Reilly's Bing show is on Angel Radio (www.angelradio.co.uk) on Tuesday nights at 10:30 p.m. UK time.

Two other shows that like to feature our man are **Swingers & Singers** (Sun. 8-10p.m) presented by David Lowe on several BBC local radio stations in the South West (search under BBC Radio Devon for links) and **Memorable Memories with Mike Carey** (Sundays 4-6p.m.). Go to bbc.co.uk/derby for more details. There are listen-again facilities for both shows.

Australia

It was good to note that *Going My Way* was shown on the Fox Classics channel on December 23.

Lachlan McLean advised me about a Bing Crosby Christmas Special on 2CH 1170 (Sydney's easy listening station) on December 22.

Ron Field, who had returned to Australia for a short holiday, heard Mairi Nicolson's "Song and Dance" programme on ABC Classic FM on January 20 which was celebrating the imminent centenary of Jimmy Van Heusen. Ron was delighted to hear Bing singing "Aren't You Glad You're You"; "Swinging on a Star"; "Chicago Style", "Yah-ta-ta, Yah-ta-ta, (Talk, Talk, Talk)" and "Busy Doing Nothing".

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7

FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week. Another radio programme featuring plenty of Bing is Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 and it can be heard on Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Patty Andrews, the lead singer of the Andrews Sisters and its last surviving member, died on January 30 of natural causes at her longtime home in Northridge in the San Fernando Valley. She was 94. Maxene, the middle Andrews sister, died in 1995 and LaVerne, the eldest, in 1967.

Patricia Marie Andrews was born in Minneapolis on February 16, 1918, to Olga, a Norwegian American, and Peter Andreos, a Greek immigrant who changed his name to Andrews as he arrived in the USA. Inspired by the Boswell Sisters, Patty and her sisters went on the road in the early 1930s with Larry Rich playing in the roadhouses and on the vaudeville stages of the Midwest.

They eventually made their way to New York, where David Kapp of Decca Records offered them a contract to make four singles at $50 apiece. One of the four was "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen," which zoomed to No. 1 in 1938 and made them overnight stars.

Known for their close, three-part harmonies, full-throated delivery and humor on stage, they churned out hit after hit, including "Hold Tight, Hold Tight," "Ferryboat Serenade," "Beat Me, Daddy, Eight to the Bar," "Rum and Coca Cola," "Shoo-Shoo Baby," "I Can Dream, Can't I?," "Near You" and " I Wanna Be Loved."

From 1938 to 1951, they had over sixty top 20 hits. In addition, their many liaisons with Bing were very successful indeed and resulted in a further sixteen songs in the top twenty.

Bing with (l to r), LaVerne, Patty and Maxene.

Their first chart success together was in 1939 with "Ciribiribin" and John Sforza writing in his book "Swing It!" said:

> "Patty was so nervous during that first session with Crosby that she was unable to look directly into his eyes. She recalled, "I was so nervous I didn't think I'd be able to sing. He was on one side of the mike and we were on the other, facing him. But I knew that if I looked at him I would not be able to open my mouth." According to music historian Joseph Laredo, "Crosby was not unaware of the intimidating effect he often had on female duet partners, and in the case of one particular skittish radio costar, had gone as far as gently taking her hand in a paternal gesture of reassurance. By averting her eyes to the ground during that first session, Patty stumbled across an interesting Crosby idiosyncrasy: "He had a thing with his foot" [she said]. 'He would move it right-to-left, right-to-left and so on—just like a metronome.'"
>
> (John Sforza, *Swing It!* page 40)

The Andrews Sisters appeared as themselves in seventeen movies, including the Abbott and Costello comedies *Buck Privates* and *In the Navy*, both released in 1941, and of course *Road to Rio* in 1947.

Patti embarked on a solo career in the 1950s after the sisters fell out for a while. She enjoyed only moderate success and the trio reunited in 1956 and continued to perform together until 1966 when LaVerne became ill. In 1973 the Andrews Sisters enjoyed a remarkable resurgence with the release of Bette Midler's version of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," which brought them to the attention of a new generation of fans. The following year, the two surviving Andrews sisters were a hit all over again, starring on Broadway in the nostalgic World War II musical "Over Here." It ran for a year until closing in disputed circumstances.

The sisters' close musical harmonies belied a private relationship that was sometimes troubled. Music industry insiders blamed it on a dispute between Maxene and Patty's second husband, Walter Weschler, a pianist and arranger, who died in 2010.

Although the sisters lived near each other in the San Fernando Valley, according to published reports, they spoke rarely and saw each other just twice from 1974 to Maxene's death in 1995: when Patty paid a bedside visit to her sister in 1982 after Maxene suffered a heart attack, and in 1987, when they were together at the public dedication of their star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Patty Andrews' first marriage, to agent Martin Melcher, ended in divorce in 1950 and Melcher went on to marry Doris Day. Patty married Weschler in 1951 and they remained married until his death. Ms. Andrews is survived by her foster daughter, Pam DuBois, a niece and several cousins.

Patti Page passed away on January 1st at the age of 85. She was born Clara Ann Fowler on November 8, 1927, in Claremore, Okla., and grew up in Tulsa. One of 11 children, she was raised during the Great Depression by a father who worked for the railroad. As a young woman, Ms. Page found work at an Oklahoma radio

station and successfully auditioned for a program called "The Meet Patti Page Show," sponsored by the Page Milk Co. When band leader Jack Rael heard her on the program and recruited her for a touring career, she took her character's fictional name with her.

Page signed with Mercury Records in 1947, and became their first successful female artist, starting with 1948's "Confess". Page recorded this in 1947 and as background singers were not available at the time to provide harmony vocals for the song, Page and the label decided to overdub her vocals on the song, in harmony. Mitch Miller, who produced for Mercury Records, was able to overdub Page's voice by recording from one acetate disc cutting machine to another. Patti Page therefore became the first pop artist to overdub her vocals on a song.

In 1950, she had her first million-selling single "With My Eyes Wide Open, I'm Dreaming" and followed this with "All My Love" and then her signature song, "Tennessee Waltz", which was one of the biggest-selling singles of the 20th century. "Tennessee Waltz" spent 13 weeks atop the *Billboard magazine's Best-Sellers List* in 1950. Joel Whitburn in his *Pop Memories* book calculated that Patti Page was the best-selling female artist of the 1950s. Her nickname was "The Singin' Rage" (a phrase commonly followed by "Miss Patti Page"). Another song with which she was closely associated was of course "The Doggie in the Window". She had no less than 43 top 20 hits in the USA - but only one after 1958.

Such tremendous success inevitably led to a couple of appearances on Bing's Chesterfield Show in 1952 and she also joined him on TV on October 1st, 1958 for *The Bing Crosby Show for Oldsmobile*.

Bing and Patti rehearse for the TV show in 1958.

In the 1960s, Page shifted her career towards country music, and she began charting on the country charts until 1982. Patti Page was one of the few vocalists to have made the country charts in five separate decades.

Page was married three times. She married University of Wisconsin student Jack Skiba in May 1948 and moved with him to New York, but asked for and received a no-fault divorce in Wisconsin within a year. Her second husband was Charles O'Curran, a choreographer, whom she married in 1956. O'Curran had been previously married to actress Betty Hutton. Together, Page and O'Curran adopted two children — a son, Danny, and a daughter, Kathleen. They divorced in 1972.

Patti Page married her third husband, Jerry Filiciotto, in 1990. Filiciotto died on April 18, 2009. They ran a maple syrup business in New Hampshire and resided in Solana Beach, California.

Fran Warren died on her 87th birthday on March 4. Born Frances Wolfe, her first big job in show business was as a chorus line dancer at New York City's Roxy Theater. By the mid nineteen forties she was a vocalist with the bands of Randy Brooks, Art Mooney, and Charlie Barnet. In 1947 she became the vocalist with the Claude Thornhill Orchestra, one of the few big bands still on the scene in the late 40s. She is probably best remembered for her work with Thornhill, particularly "A Sunday Kind of Love" which was a top 20 hit in 1947. In 1948 Fran Warren left the Thornhill band just as it was breaking up, and she went out as a solo performer. She had several minor hits before achieving a No. 3 chart entry with a duet she recorded with Tony Martin on "I Said My Pajamas (and Put on My Prayers)". Fran Warren appeared on Bing's Chesterfield Show in March 1952, the same year that she was featured in the movie *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd*. In 1964, she received negative publicity and lost bookings when arrested for marijuana possession. In the late 1970s, she reconnected with musical director and trumpet player Joe Cabot, with whom she had worked extensively during the 1950s and 1960s. From 1979-1982, they toured together with the musical review *The Big Broadcast of 1944*, and enjoyed two sold-out engagements at New York City's acclaimed jazz club, Michael's Pub.

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what was happening in years gone by.

75 YEARS AGO

Bing and Dixie's fourth son, Lindsay Harry was born at 4:35 a.m. on January 5, 1938 at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, weighing in at six pounds five ounces. He was named after Lindsay Howard, Bing's racing partner.

On January 15 and 16, Bing's second golf pro-am took place at Rancho Santa Fe. Sam Snead won it again. Bing played with Harold Sampson and on the first day they had a best ball score of seventy-one. Rain adversely affected the tournament. Other celebrities playing

included Johnny Weissmuller, Richard Arlen, Bob Burns and Leon Errol.

Bing was continuing to host the weekly Kraft Music Hall show and on January 29, 1938 the show won the Hearst Radio Editors' Poll for the best variety program. Bing was also named as most popular male vocalist. Columnist Herb Caen had some nice things to say about the show.

> Through a subtle, if lengthy, process, Mr. Bing Crosby's Music Hall has changed its complexion until at this moment it stands as one of the premiere comedy shows of radio. Nobody can say accurately whether this was the original plan of the producers or whether, being uncommonly fortunate souls, they merely stumbled over the realization that the Crosby contingent can juggle gags with the greatest of ease. It seems fairly obvious, though, that within some three years, the Music Hall has turned resolutely from a routine variety show formula to one of refreshing sparkle and humor, topped not even by the facile Jack Benny troupe.
>
> Nobody will deny the wisdom of this move. Formal variety programs, which run their guests on and off in the familiar vaudeville manner, have their place, admittedly. So have the looser clambakes, with their artificial camaraderie, their trite jovialities, their brittle pace. But never before the late blossoming forth of Mr. Crosby's stunt, had dialers been let in a 60-minute funfest which not only sounded legitimately informal, but provided, as well, wholly original humor of a relaxed nature.
>
> The Music Hall's original and avowed purpose, that of presenting guest stars, has of course been lost in the shuffle, but nobody seems to care a whole lot. Guests of Mr. Crosby aren't treated as sacred cows. If you want to look at the setup from the angle of a Vallee program, the visitors do, in fact, get a slight working over. It becomes pretty apparent to the listener that the guests are merely there to play stooge roles in a Crosby comedy routine.
>
> Last Thursday's Crosby concoction illustrated its new full-blown wittiness pretty well. Its most serious line, if we remember, came during Mr. Crosby's introduction of duo-pianists Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson. Their selection, Beethoven's "Ruins of Athens" was described by Mr. C. as "one of the juicier morsels turned out by the great and good Loodveeg von B—" The rest of the program was much less pontifical, we assure you.
>
> (Herb Caen, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 7, 1938)

On March 10, Harry Owens' song "Sweet Leilani" won the Oscar for the "Original Song" of 1937 at the ceremonies at the Biltmore Hotel. Other nominated songs included "Remember Me," "That Old Feeling," "They Can't Take That Away from Me," and "Whispers in the Dark." Harry Owens paid a fulsome tribute to Bing (who was not there) as he accepted the Oscar.

Bing filmed *Sing You Sinners* during April and May with Fred MacMurray, Donald O'Connor, Elizabeth Patterson, and Ellen Drew. The film's original title was "Harmony for Three" and this became "The Unholy Beebes" until it was changed just before release.

Bing's film *Doctor Rhythm* had its Los Angeles premiere at the Paramount on April 28 and was generally well received.

> Frank Tuttle, who directed *Waikiki Wedding* with Crosby starred, seems to have the right combination on the crooner's films...*Dr. Rhythm* will keep Crosby at his present high box-office rating.
> (*Variety*, April 27, 1938)

> It is an agreeable hodgepodge of a musical film replete with comedy, and blessed with a couple of pleasant song numbers which Crosby delivers in a manner which proved highly ingratiating to last night's preview patrons, even to the inclusion of this reporter, who was once "the groaner's" diligent detractor.
> (James Francis Crow, *Hollywood Citizen News*, April 29, 1938)

With Bea Lillie in Dr. Rhythm

50 YEARS AGO

As 1963 opened, Bing had been suffering with his kidney stones for some time but he was able to attend the Bing Crosby Pro-Am at Pebble Beach on January 17-20.The tournament was won by Billy Casper. Celebrities playing included Phil Harris, John Raitt, Ernie Ford, James Garner, Ray Milland, and Fred MacMurray. The entertainers at the Victory Dinner were Rosemary Clooney, Rowan & Martin, Bob Crosby's Bobcats and the Buddy Cole Orchestra.

But Bing was still suffering, as Kathryn Crosby recorded in her book "My Life with Bing":-

> Bing too had been considering the deteriorating state of his health. With increased frequency and for longer intervals he was incapacitated with

excruciating abdominal pain. Hoping desperately that it would go away, he avoided all thought or mention of it, and escaped into ceaseless activity. . . . But his kidney stones rode with him, and finally brought him to bay on January 29.
(Kathryn Crosby, *My Life with Bing*, page 235)

On January 29, Bing entered St. John's Hospital and at 6:30 p.m. he had emergency surgery on his right kidney. He made a good recovery and then went to his home in Las Cruces on the Baja California Peninsula to recuperate. The TV show he had recorded with Dinah Shore in December 1962 was shown on February 17, 1963 and had good reviews.

Dinah Shore's show became a major event with the addition of Bing Crosby to its cast. The presence of Der Bingle was not only a valuable asset to its entertainment values but he seemed to excite every department, as well.... Bing's casual air and humor-laden renditions generated excitement. "In a Little Spanish Town" and "Que Sas" comprised his first medley, and then with Miss Shore sat down for a lighthearted and gay session of singing and banter. It was an easy, graceful stint by a pair of pros. Crosby also seemed a bit thinner than usual, but didn't let it interfere with his work. He seems ageless.
(*Variety*, February 19, 1963)

On February 27, Bing wrote to Rena Albanesi, the editor of BINGANG.

Thanks for your note recently received. Happy to learn that you enjoyed the Dinah Shore telecast. I hope you had a chance to see it in color, because they had some real pretty sets, and she wore some lovely clothes, which of course were vastly enhanced by the use of color.

She has a wonderful production staff. Having been on television for so many years, she has been able to put together quite a unit. Particularly valuable is Ticker Freeman, who has been her accompanist and musical advisor for many years - I guess almost since Dinah started out as a single, after leaving band work. So it was a pleasant chore, working with people like this.

The reaction to the show has been uniformly good, I've run into quite a few people who said they enjoyed it, and the critical consensus was fine. So we were pleased that we took on the job.

I have been out of hospital now a couple of weeks and I'm feeling fine again. Takes quite a while to regain your full strength but I've been going into the office in the afternoons and doing other little chores, increasing the work load a little bit every day, so I think in a short time I'll be as good as new.

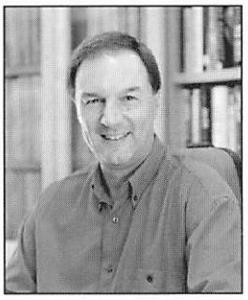
Please give my best to all of the "Bingang". Warmest regards to yourself.

On March 22, Kathryn and the children joined Bing at Las Cruces. They began a regular annual routine of cleaning the tiny Mexican church there.

Dinah Shore welcomes Bing to her show.

KEEPING TRACK

Ken Crossland looks at the new releases



A snow-covered winter landscape as I type this seems to capture the "hard times" feel to the new releases section of the mag. Mutterings from around the Crosby machine suggest a deal is pending to resume the flow that we enjoyed a year or two back, and indeed I note that many of the Collectors Choice releases have just been announced for re-release this spring under the Universal Music banner and available from Amazon in the US and the UK.

Here's what has caught my eye in the meantime ....

COMPACT DISCS

First off, a couple of carry-overs from last time.

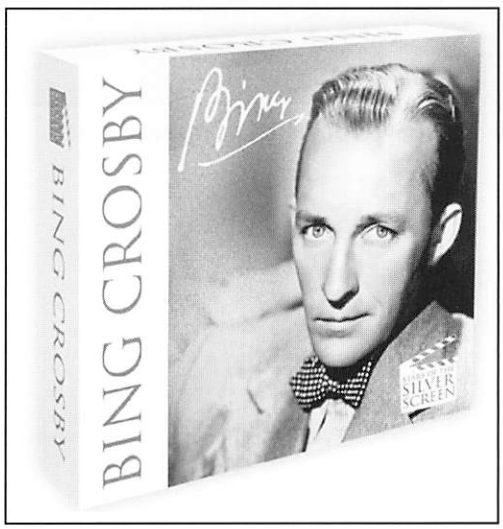
Bing Crosby - Love Is Sounds of Yesteryear DSOY903 £8/$14

1.Pistol Packin' Mama (with The Andrews Sisters) 2. On Top Of Old Smokey (with Burl Ives) 3. There's A Small Hotel 4. These Foolish Things 5. I Love You; 6. The One I Love Belongs To Somebody Else (with Al Jolson) 7. Symphony 8. Ballerina 9. When You Wore a Tulip 10. You Are Too Beautiful 11. People Will Say We're In Love 12. I Can Dream, Can't I? 13. Mine (with Judy Garland) 14. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (with Al Jolson) 15. September Song 16. Day By Day 17. On a Slow Boat to China 18. It Could Happen to You 19. How It Lies, How It Lies, How It Lies (with Evelyn Knight) 20. To See You Is to Love You 21. Harbour Lights 22. All Through the Day 23. It's Only a Paper Moon 24. You Don't Have to Know the Language 25. Now Is the Hour 26. But Beautiful

The marketing blurb that accompanies this release tells us that all the tracks are drawn from the period between 1944 and 1951, and feature many duets with the likes of Burl Ives, Al Jolson and Peggy Lee. Certainly the titles all look familiar but given that, the disc is probably a bit overpriced, at least if you have to pay the recommended price that is set out above.

Bing! 3CD set Memory Lane GLMY3B04 £14/$21

Disc 1- "Classic Bing": 1. They Say It's Wonderful 2. I'll Be Seeing You 3. Autumn Leaves 4. Far Away Places 5. Galway Bay 6. Remember Me 7. The Whiffenpoof Song 8. On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe 9. You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby 10. San Fernando Valley 11. Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy 12. Deep in the Heart of Texas 13. You Belong to My Heart 14. I Love You 15. I'll Be Home for Christmas 16. Stardust 17. All My Love 18. Red Sails in the Sunset 19. I Can't Begin to Tell You 20. It's Been a Long, Long Time 21. Somebody Loves Me 22. Among My Souvenirs 23. Deep Purple 24. Beautiful Dreamer 25. Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life 26. The Anniversary Waltz



Disc 2 - "Bing & Friends": 1. True Love (with Grace Kelly) 2. Well, Did You Evah? (with Frank Sinatra) 3. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 4. Watermelon Weather (with Peggy Lee) 5. Day By Day (with The Mel-Tones) 6. Sam's Song (with Gary Crosby) 7. Silver Bells (with Carol Richards) 8. (Yip Yip De Hootie) My Baby Said Yes (with Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five) 9. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 10. An Apple for the Teacher (with Connee Boswell) 11. If I Were a Bell (with Patty Andrews) 12. On the Sunny Side of the Street (with Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra) 13. Pistol Packin' Mama (with The Andrews Sisters) 14. Play a Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 15. Mine (with Judy Garland) 16. Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't (Ma' Baby) (with The Andrews Sisters) 17. Bob White (Whatcha Gonna Swing Tonight) (with Connee Boswell) 18. A Fine Romance (with Dixie Lee Crosby) 19. Mister Meadowlark (with Johnny Mercer) 20. A Couple of Song and Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 21. South America, Take It Away (with The Andrews Sisters) 22. (There'll Be a) Hot Time in the Town of Berlin (with The Andrews Sisters) 23. McNamara's Band (with The Jesters) 24. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (with Al Jolson) 25. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 26. People Will Say We're In Love (with Trudy Erwin)

Disc 3 "Bing on Film": 1. Where the Blue of the Night 2. But Beautiful 3. Swinging On a Star 4. Small Fry (with Johnny Mercer) 5. Be Careful, It's My Heart 6. Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive (with The Andrews Sisters) 7. Road to

Morocco (with Bob Hope) 8. Sunday, Monday or Always 9. Moonlight Becomes You 10. Too Romantic 11. Easter Parade 12. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 13. Mexicali Rose 14. In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (with Jane Wyman) 15. Love Is Just Around the Corner 16. I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams 17. I'm an Old Cow-Hand 18. That's for Me 19. It's Always You 20. Pennies from Heaven 21. My Melancholy Baby 22. Dinah (with the Mills Brothers) 23. Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie (with Mary Martin) 24. White Christmas

It's difficult to argue with Memory Lane's assertion that, in selecting from "Bing Crosby's huge catalogue of over 2,500 songs, we have done all the hard work to create the ultimate Bing collection! The biggest hits, the classic duets, the greatest songs from his glittering film career...and all presented in a highly collectable deluxe edition box-set comprising three CDs and three full colour booklets." Unclear without a set to hand, whether disc 3 is commercial material or soundtrack (my guess would be the former), but a comprehensive release nevertheless.

There was the usual selection of Christmas releases that appeared after the last issue went to print, mostly mp3 downloads and nothing as far as I could see, that was new, so I plan not to dwell on them. Instead, we turn our attentions to our friends at Sepia, who having concluded the "Through the Years" series, are happily addressing other parts of Bing's catalogue. Here's the first.

The Road to Hong Kong / Say One for Me (original soundtracks) SEPIA 1216 £6/$9

1. "The Road to Hong Kong Overture" - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 2. Let's Not Be Sensible - Bing, Joan Collins 3. Moon Over Hong Kong - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 4. Teamwork - Bing, Bob Hope 5. The Only Way to Travel - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 6. The Chase - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 7. The Road to Hong Kong – Bing, Bob Hope 8. Let's Not Be Sensible Blues - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 9. Reluctant Astronauts - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 10. Warmer Than a Whisper - Dorothy Lamour 11. Lamasery Chant - Robert Farnon & Orchestra 12. "Say One for Me" Main Title - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 13. Say One for Me – Bing, Debbie Reynolds 14. 14. Say One for Me - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 15. You Can't Love 'Em All - Debbie Reynolds, Robert Wagner 16. Say One for Me (Orchestral Reprise) - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 17. The Girl Most Likely to Succeed - Debbie Reynolds, Robert Wagner 18.You Can't Love 'Em All (Orchestral Reprise) - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 19. The Night That Rock 'n Roll Died (Almost) - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 20. I Couldn't Care Less – Bing, accompanied by Buddy Cole 21. I Couldn't Care Less (Hangover Scene) - Lionel Newman & Orchestra 22. The Night That Rock 'n Roll Died (Almost) - Judy Harriett 23. Say One for Me - Bing 24. Chico's Choo Choo - Debbie Reynolds, Robert Wagner 25. The Secret of Christmas - Bing 26. I Couldn't Care Less (Pop Version) - Bing 27. Say One for Me (Pop Version) - Bing 28. The Secret of Christmas - (Pop Version) Bing

From a collector's perspective, this is a highly welcome release, with comprehensive notes from our editor and 24 bit mastering based on sound restoration by Robin Cherry. Looked at from a commercial perspective, one has to say it's a brave move by Sepia to start their post-Through the Years releases with this, so please, everyone, buy a copy! By any standards, the Hong Kong LP is weak. Setting aside my own personal aversion to background soundtracks (who on earth wants to hear stuff like "Reluctant Astronauts" without seeing the images that the music is intended to support), there was very little Bing on the original LP and what there is was obviously recorded in cheap and nasty fashion. "Teamwork", arguably the best of all the Crosby-Hope road duets, sounds as if it was recorded in an underwater garden by the sea, and Bing's other solo, "Let's Not Be Sensible" was obviously only ever done on set, complete - or should I say incomplete - with the final word of the song being lost in a screen kiss and overdubbed for the original UK Decca single release by a stand-in. Such a shame as it's a nice song and would have warranted a "proper' Bing recording. "Say One for Me" is better, despite having the same uphill struggle that faces any disc littered with incidental music, and is also in stereo. I remember coming back from a trip to the States many years ago, clutching a very scarce stereo copy of the original LP, which was very seldom seen, so wonderful to have it here. Best track is Bing's soundtrack solo of "I Couldn't Care Less" sung to Buddy Cole's piano but also included are the three commercial recordings of songs from the movie, that Bing did for Columbia - mono only recordings sadly.

Swing Low, Sweet Charioteers Jasmine Records JASCD 714 £11.99/ $20 UK

Our friends at Jasmine in the UK have come up with an interesting double CD release featuring Bing's vocal group companions from KMH days, the Charioteers. The release has 58 tracks, mostly solos by the group, but seven of them backing Bing. There are also two items with Frank Sinatra and one with Peggy Lee. The 7 tracks with Bing are "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans", "Basin St. Blues", "Moonlight Bay" (1944 version), "Is You Is or Is You Ain't (Ma' Baby)", "Sentimental Journey", "Moonlight Bay" (1946 version) and "Love Is Just Around the Corner". Our own Geoff Milne produced the CD.

DVD and Blu-ray

Dixie / Sing You Sinners / Variety Girl Simply Media £12.99 each UK

Three new DVDs, each issued as a single release, by the UK company, Simply Media. Highlight of the three is *Dixie* Bing's 1943 and first Technicolor movie, which appears on DVD for the first time. *Sing You Sinners* has previously been available as part of a boxed set and *Variety Girl* is of course a "compilation" movie, with many stars and limited input from Bing. All are available from Amazon UK but note that they are coded for Region 2 only and may not be viewable outside Europe.

Meanwhile, from the USA comes news of two releases from Nostalgia Merchant. TV Variety Shows - Rare Classics Vol. 1 is a 6DVD set, of which disc 4 is Bing's "High Tor" TV movie from 1956, featuring Bing with a young Julie Andrews (this show was of course included in the same label's "Bing Crosby Collection" reviewed last time.) Nostalgia Merchant also offers sets of Hollywood Palace shows and their latest offering, The Hollywood Palace Collection Vol. 3 features ten 1-hour shows, three of which have Bing as the host. More details on the web at http://www.nostalgiamerchant.biz/index.htm

Also, it's good to see that the blu-ray version of *White Christmas* is now available from Amazon in the UK as a Region free edition.

What's on the Web?

Finally, a tale of a frustrated collector - me! Some time back, I purchased a top of the range 1960s record player and found to my delight, that it brought both my vinyl and 78 collection back to life to such an extent that I resumed my long-dormant quest to complete my collection of Crosby 78s issued in Britain. There were around 600 78s released here, mainly Brunswick, but when you add in the early Crosby, issues on HMV, Columbia and Parlophone pop up too. 12 months ago I had around 450 of the 600 and since then I have taken my tally up to 520.

Imagine then my surprise - and delight - when a standard eBay alert popped up a month or so back announcing the listing of "a collection of 810 Bing Crosby 78s". My first instinct was that it was a misprint, but no, it was correct. "Collection only" said the seller, hardly surprising for that volume, but since the location was Derby, less than 50 miles from my home, that presented no obstacle. There were other smaller collections for sale too - Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Frankie Laine, but these were 50 or so discs each, not the mammoth Crosby quantity (and in the end, these others either attracted no bidders or went to a single bid at the starting price of £10. The irony will strike you when you see the outcome to my story.)

No listing of titles was offered but with the starting bid set attractively low at £50, it was a tempting proposition. There was no way of knowing how many of my missing 80 might be in the collection, nor what the make up was between British and overseas issues. Simple arithmetic told me that with only 600 UK issues in total, there must at least 25% of the 810 drawn from overseas. There was also the practicality of it too. I have 100 or so 78s other than Bing, so my music room houses about 620 shellac discs. Here, prospectively, I was more than doubling it and even after weeding out the inevitable duplicates, there would remain the question of "where will you put them?" (I phrase it the way it was put to me by my ever-patient wife). To Hell with it I thought, bid and be damned.

I have to be honest and say that I did not expect much competition. I am a regular at the quarterly 78 record fair held near where I live and whenever I ask the dealers where their Crosby records are, I always get the same answer - "at home in the garage. Nobody wants them." When I do stumble across one, I seldom pay more than 50 pence, at least for a Brunswick. Then of course, there the question of trekking to Derby to collect them - fine for where I live, but for anyone more than 100 miles from Derby (and most people are), it's a sizeable investment of time and money.

I decided to bid £105, which with the costs of collecting would take my outlay to around £130. My expectation was that I would probably retain no more than a quarter of the 810 after weeding out duplicates and overseas releases that I did not want, but I thought it represented a fair outlay and a reasonable price for a bulk purchase done blind. The week of the auction passed with no other bids and notably no other bids on any of the other 78 collections the seller was offering. I was already looking forward to the task of getting 800 78s into my car and lovingly sorting through them when, bang, it all changed in the last 30 seconds of the auction. Three more bidders appeared. One failed to match my bid but two others blasted through and the set went for £233 with no time for me to respond.

Would I have gone higher? Should I have gone higher? How would I have felt if I had won it at £500 and then found that most of my missing 80 issues were still missing? Who knows? All I know is that I am left with a sense of disappointment at a chance missed. And if, dear reader, you happen to be the winning bidder and you are reading this with a smug smile, I'm still in the market if you are looking to make a little profit on your 25 pence per disc purchase!

Happy listening!

ken@kencrossland.co.uk **http://www.kencrossland.co.uk**

Bing Crosby

Hollywood

February 1, 1956

Mr. George O'Reilly
"Santa Maria"
Shantalla Road
Brookville, Whitehall
Dublin, Ireland

Dear George:

My warmest thanks for the lovely Irish glassware. It's very beautiful and my Mother raved about it.

Working on a new picture with Grace Kelly, Sinatra, and Louie Armstrong. It looks very good - M.G.M. Studio. Color, Vista-Vision, and a good light comedy script. Armstrong, of course, is a riot. Cole Porter wrote a new score which I think is one of his best recent jobs.

"Anything Goes" previewed to very good reaction. Not much story, but good production numbers. O'Connor, Gaynor, and Jeanmaire in the cast.

I'm working on plans to go abroad this spring. Maybe April. Hope I can work it out, but there are some details yet to be taken care of. Will certainly include Ireland this time.

Hope all goes well with your family and your shop.

As ever,

Bing

Bing Crosby

BC:rc

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